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"FRIENDLY DISPOSED"

THE latest British insult to the exiles, whom we have welcomed as our guests in this country, is to advise relatives of men deported to the Dominions to send their letters to the "Prisoners of War Information Bureau." The Home Office regard this cruel piece of nonsense as nothing more than an office classification with no political significance. Has no one in authority the imagination to see how deeply such insults hurt and alarm these luckless exiles who want to help us in our struggle with the Nazis? This new insult fits only too well into the picture already created by the report, which has never been denied, that the names of all German refugees in this country have been passed on to the Nazi authorities *via* Switzerland on the ground that they were classed as "prisoners of war." And to rub home the lesson that England is fighting for freedom, comes the news that men and women who are released from our internment camps are asked to sign a document, just as they were when released from German concentration camps, promising not to say anything about the conditions of their confinement.

These antics cannot be explained by an outbreak of xenophobia amongst the common people of England. On the contrary, there is every evidence of growing popular disgust at the official policy of treating our friends as if they were enemies. The Duke of Devonshire told the House of Lords that the policy of panic internment did not originate in the Home Office. He was right. The crime of the Home Office, which is liberal in sympathy, was that it surrendered weakly to the pressure of the War Office, which decided without reason to look among refugees for the Fifth Column. Ultimately, responsibility must fall on the War Cabinet, in which there sit two Labour Ministers who could surely have withstood the panic, as well as Lord Halifax, whose principles should have forbidden so unchristian a policy, and Mr. Churchill who, had he had time to consider, must have seen the military folly of locking up invaluable allies and destroying the force of his appeal to fight for the liberation of Europe.

Some people may imagine that all this is changed since Sir John Anderson's statement in the House of Commons and the appointment of a Committee, with admirable personnel, to look after the welfare of internees. The Committee, as our correspondents show, will have plenty to do, and we may expect, if the policy of wholesale internment and deportation continues, that the actual conditions in the camps will become less shocking. Perhaps, indeed, the appointment of the Committee will divert attention from the policy of wholesale internment which is the main evil. Most people imagine that the White Paper issued by the Home Office means that a large number of German and Austrian internees will be quickly released. Mr. Ernest Bevin, alone among the Cabinet Ministers, has had the courage to speak strongly on this matter. He demands that "friendly disposed" aliens who are refugees in this country shall be properly employed, and he has at once instituted a department of the Ministry to enrol the skilled men amongst them and an Advisory Committee representative of exiled Trade Unionists. Here, indeed, is the beginning of a sane policy, but Mr. Bevin may have to fight hard, for there is nothing in the Home Office White Paper which assures us that that release is to be more than the exception.

At first glance the White Paper, with its eighteen categories of persons eligible for release, looks impressive. But sixteen of the categories were already in force when releases were rare or non-existent and arrests wholesale. Only two changes have been made, of which one (the inclusion of "scientists, research workers and persons of academic distinction for whom work of national importance in their special fields is available") represents a real concession to recent agitation. If the special Committees to be set up by the Vice-Chancellors to deal with this category do their job properly, some individual releases must follow. The other change relates to sick people. Previously only "persons requiring constant medical attention" were entitled to release under this head, and few, if any, were in fact released. This category now becomes simply "the invalid or infirm." Categories 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9, covering those able to do useful work, in fact apply only to men actually in employment at the time of arrest (many aliens were dismissed immediately before arrest),

and make release conditional upon the application of the employer, often too busy to trouble with it, and too hurried to endure the long delay between application and actual release. Category 18 (" special cases of extreme hardship ") is very vague, and will not cover, for instance, the many cases of pregnant wives left to face an imminent confinement alone, unless the Committee specially demands it.

More striking still are the omissions. The White Paper does nothing for the Italian internees, of whom a few hundred are genuine Jewish refugees and many more respected and harmless residents of long standing, or for the State-less refugees, who are often among the most determined anti-Nazis. It leaves in the camps large numbers of British-born wives of A and B category aliens, including at least one whose German husband is still at liberty and others who have been separated from their husbands for years, as well as still larger numbers of men and women who have lived here most of their lives, not troubling about naturalisation because of the expense, but whose sympathies and habits of mind are wholly British. It says nothing of refugees able and willing to help the country, sometimes in vital services for which they have special qualifications, but who were unfortunate enough to be unemployed at the time of internment. And Sir John Anderson's promised category of those who had given proof of anti-Nazi sentiments is still missing.

The most numerous group of those omitted, however, is that of the B category aliens, originally numbering about 3,000. The scandal of these cases has never been adequately aired. Some tribunals placed all aliens appearing before them in this category; others, by a kind of friendly arrangement, put in it elderly and ailing people to whom the restrictions on travel were not likely to be a hardship—with the result that when the round-up of B category aliens began, the police in some districts had a wonderful haul of crippled and bed-ridden sexagenarians. The relatives of men temporarily placed in categories A or B also became B category aliens, and have in some cases been interned before the case against their husbands or fathers could be heard. Some Poles and Czechs who accurately but unwisely gave their " previous nationality "—i.e., previous to 1920—as German or Austrian have also found themselves in camps, with no present prospects of release. There is evidence that the advisory committees set up to reconsider these B cases are in fact reclassifying women hitherto in the C category, and sending them also off to the camps.

The last section of the White Paper adds a final hindrance. " No special form of application is provided, but . . . the grounds on which release is applied for . . . should be stated." The applicant, in other words, is not told, except in the very general terms of the White Paper itself, if he is fortunate enough to possess a copy, on what grounds he is entitled to apply and is left with only the notoriously slow and inadequate postal facilities of the camps to communicate with prospective employers, etc. If the Home Office wishes to give real evidence of a change of heart, it can best do so by producing a new and more comprehensive White Paper as rapidly as possible. But the simplest and most sensible thing to do would be to revert to what in theory was its former policy of interning only those against whom real suspicions are entertained.

Meanwhile the women and children left destitute by the internment of the men are recommended to seek relief from the Public Assistance Committees. Again, we wonder whether the authorities have any conception of what this means in terms of human misery. Our correspondence suggests that there may be people who are anxious to help these people financially—until the Government can be forced to face its responsibilities. One substantial cheque has already reached us: if others arrive we shall be glad to see that they go to one of the responsible committees concerned.

Italy in Africa

We may expect a rather uncomfortable time in dealing with the Italians in North-East Africa. The heat is at its worst, but this does not seem to deter them and they have a superiority in numbers large enough to endow them with sensations of confidence all the more pleasurable because they are unfamiliar. Three columns of their troops are now invading British Somaliland. This territory is valueless, save in so far as an enemy who seized it might make himself a nuisance in the Red Sea. It is also likely that they may cross the frontier between Libya and Egypt: indeed, it is probable that they have already done so. That is of no consequence, for our lines in this uninhabited desert lie fifty miles within the frontier. The further the Italians have to transport their water, the better for us. They can risk these far from impressive feats, because the collapse of the French has allowed them to concentrate all their considerable forces in Libya against us. Even this might not be serious, given the poor quality of their troops, unless some Germans are with them, which is possible. Our garrison in Egypt is numerically weak and though it was recently mechanised in part, the transformation was not as complete as one could wish. On the other hand, the single strategical road that carries both the Italians and their water is vulnerable from the sea over nearly all its immense length.

Reprisals ?

As an appropriate sequel to the arrest of the leading British residents in Japan, the authorities in this country have imprisoned the London managers of the two firms, Mitsui and Mitsubishi, which between them dominate " big business " in Japan. In accordance with the humorous formula favoured by diplomacy, the Foreign Office announced that this was not a reprisal. We venture to think that in this analysis of its own motives the Foreign Office did itself an injustice. Apparently this expedient worked, for half the British prisoners have been released. The news, however, is mixed, for seven Salvation Army officers have now been arrested in Japan for espionage. We are not sure how to interpret a rather effusive statement by a Japanese diplomatic spokesman in London, to the effect that relations between the two countries are on the verge of an harmonious settlement. The only correct rule of behaviour towards militarist dictatorships is to display toughness, even if one has to bluff with a very poor hand. The Japs know that our Navy is otherwise engaged, but they do not know what influence we may be able to use in Washington.

Problems of Blockade

American public opinion is deeply concerned over the danger of famine in Europe, and we shall find it a delicate task to justify our blockade of the friendly countries under German occupation. Mr. Cudahy, the Minister of the U.S.A. in Belgium, is returning to Washington with the intention of proposing a revival of Mr. Hoover's organisation which functioned during the last war. He reports that the bread ration, which now amounts to half-a-pound, cannot be continued after October and the prospect for meat is even worse. The Pétain Government has appealed directly to the American Government to use its good offices to mitigate the blockade. Unoccupied France grows only a fraction of the wheat it needs, and it is cut off from the corn-lands both of the occupied North and of North Africa. Reports from Norway are equally distressing: even fish, of which it normally has a surplus for export, is lacking, because there is no petrol for the boats. The difficulty is obvious—that any importation of food will ease the task of the occupying Power. Against this, three considerations have to be weighed. (1) This year the Germans are unlikely to suffer acutely, so that our blockade of food will have no effect on their morale. (2) A refusal to consider America's plea for humanity may cool her friendship towards ourselves. (3) Finally, if the conquered populations can blame us for their sufferings, will they be likely to welcome us as liberators when we are ready to undertake an offensive on their soil? If any proposal should come from America, they will have to be scrutinised with all these factors in mind. We may be sure that the last thing Mr. Roosevelt will wish to do is to help the enemy, even indirectly.

Supply Problems *(from an Industrial Correspondent)*

Mr. Bevin's and Mr. Morrison's decision to aim at a reduction of hours to an average of 56 and the resumption of a six-day week is well timed. Equally welcome is Mr. Bevin's announcement of his plan for large scale re-training on lines recently outlined in this journal. How little however has been done to achieve a corresponding discipline on the employers' side was shown in the Debate last Wednesday. Only a dramatic intervention by Ernest Bevin saved Mr. Greenwood from the castigation which his dreary harangue deserved. The House wanted indications of a plan, and all it got was

a portentous list of co-ordinating committees and inter-departmental liaisons. Mr. Greenwood seemed to be unaware of the central problem—that it is the big employer who is standing in the way and protesting that he cannot increase his firm's output unless he is supplied with a much greater number of highly skilled men. This curious situation is no mere accident. Modern trusts and combines think and act instinctively in terms of restrictive monopoly. For years past they have been busy buying up and destroying, or driving out of business, competitors whose capacity is "redundant." Even under war conditions, they cannot stop themselves from thinking and acting in similar ways.

Thus, when it is proposed that new firms should be brought in to increase production, the first thought of the big firms is that the effect will be to put these firms in a position to compete with them *after the war*. He does not want his patent rights and secret processes to be made known to anyone outside the ring; and he will do his best (even if he is acting as an agent of the State) to prevent the sub-contracts from being so distributed as to give his rivals a real chance of competing with him in the post-war market. Nor has the raising of the duty on excess profits to 100 per cent. done anything to alter this attitude. Indeed, it puts a premium on inflating costs, and it is remarkable how many works and offices have been beautifully painted and decorated of late.

In order to get the maximum output of war material, it is indispensable to make full use of small firms equipped for making essential parts. These firms can be best used if each is allowed to specialise in the continuous manufacture of a narrow range of products, and to adapt his plant at the outset to this specialised form of production. In order to secure this, the placing of sub-contracts by the main contractors ought to be pooled, at any rate regionally if not nationally. The entire order for each standardised small part ought to be placed by a single agency, which could thus give the small firms an assurance of continuous demand for a uniform product.

Instead of this, what is actually occurring is that each main contractor is making his own arrangements with sub-contractors. The small firms, instead of getting continuous orders, are constantly asked to re-tender for fresh small orders; and often firms which have adapted their machinery and trained their labour to produce one thing find that the order for the next batch is removed elsewhere and they have to set to work on producing something different, involving fresh adaptations of plant and labour.

The remedy is obvious. Instead of the farce of "controlled establishments," the State ought to take over completely the ownership and control of all the main contractors working for the three Supply Ministries, pay the owners of these establishments a fixed interim dividend related to their pre-war profits; and place every active employer, as well as manager, working in them on a fixed salary. The amount of compensation could be left to be fixed after the war. This would be no hardship, as the owners would in the meanwhile continue to draw their fixed dividends—plus salaries, where they were actively working as managers. After the war, the State could decide either to keep the properties thus acquired, and pay compensation, or to hand them back. But for the war period at least, the purpose should be to eliminate private profit and the profit incentive.

The Government could then proceed to deal with the smaller firms in terms of a comprehensive plan. The best method of doing this (it is already in use in a very few instances) would be to encourage the small firms to form associations of their own to contract directly with the supply departments and to arrange among themselves for the distribution of orders among the various establishments, so as to secure the greatest possible amount of continuous specialisation.

There is a further reason, hardly less cogent, for a real State control of the big firms. On no other terms is it practicable effectively to control wages, or to persuade the workers that they are getting a square deal. They have borne the coincidence of monstrously long hours in some factories with under employment in others, the prodigious inconveniences of billeting in grossly overcrowded areas or daily travel over long distances to new jobs, and have pressed for a further intensification of the war effort. But this mood cannot last indefinitely unless it is reinforced by the confidence that the employers are being subjected to a similar discipline in the interests of the war effort. This confidence at present does not exist.

Cooper's Snoopers

A Parliamentary Correspondent writes: What a grand two-a-penny knock-her-over-and-take-your-choice Aunt Sally the Ministry of Information has been in this war! Dora was poor sport in comparison. When you've got to be polite to the Government, what a relief to take pot-shots at 999 anonymous pundits in Bloomsbury (the name itself raises a laugh) with a Minister at the top who is liable to lose his temper if properly baited. But considered seriously, Mr. Duff-Cooper really had all the best of the argument about the wartime survey. Mr. A. P. Herbert's frequent interruptions were scarcely to the point. Most Englishmen fear the word science; and Mr. Herbert is an Oxford classic as well as an Englishman. Sir Archibald Southby, who led the attack, was more comic. The Ministry of Information's job, he thought, was to provide information, not to get it; it need do no propaganda, for "this country has not got the jitters and is perfectly happy." He himself knew by his own post-bag that he was an excellent representative of his own constituency and he was infuriated by Mass-Observation, which actually attempts by a new method to supplement the traditional omniscience of Parliament and the press. Had not Mr. Tom Harrisson said "that the press and the politicians have little idea what the masses are really thinking and feeling"? Sir Derrick Gunston patiently explained the use of the Gallup and other surveys in America and Sir Richard Acland contributed a large amount of useful information at unnecessary length. Other speakers showed complete ignorance of the subject. Mr. Duff-Cooper urged that if Sir Archibald Southby was representative of Epsom, then Mr. Gallacher must be representative of West Fife; he added that with party politics at a standstill and many Members serving in the Forces, the House was less representative than usual and that "the usefulness of M.P.s is at present limited." Lord Winterton pointed out that the logic of this argument led to a General Election. But Mr. Duff-Cooper refused to be drawn; he might have been entangled in an interesting, if not strictly relevant, discussion. Many Members would like to find a technique by which even in wartime we may get a House of Commons less hopelessly unrepresentative than this one elected to apply sanctions to Italy in 1935. Then Mr. Duff-Cooper got annoyed. He said if there were any "snoopers" in the world they were the ghouls employed by the press to ring up houses of mourning for hot news. The whole attack on the wartime survey was a press stunt which in happier times would have been expected in the "silly season." The press behaved irresponsibly. Five newspapers were attacking him: none of them printed his reply or even stated that the wartime survey was in use before he reached the Ministry. He gave an excellent example of the practical use of such surveys. The relevant Ministries could be kept in touch with public feeling about matters which could not otherwise be known; most people preferred, for instance, to fetch their own milk at just a little cheaper price than to pay more and have it delivered. Sir Herbert Williams was incredulous when Mr. Duff-Cooper referred to the fact that a lot of poor people cannot afford radio sets, and the Minister scored heavily when he explained (1) that Mr. Tom Harrisson was not in the Ministry and that Mass-Observation had occasionally been used for special inquiries, and (2) that no official "snoopers" had ever gone round for the Ministry. If nurses or public servants employed on other jobs were used to make inquiries, as Mr. Mander suggested in one of his less thoughtful moments, then indeed there really would be cause for alarm and reason to fear a disguised Gestapo. The debate left one with the impression that the press and House of Commons both felt that they had a vested interest in the interpretation of public opinion and that they must destroy an interloper; and that the Ministry of Information had committed an error in tact when it started such a survey without taking both M.P.s and the press into its confidence.

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MR. AMERY AND THE INDIAN PROBLEM

THE quarrel between the British Empire and Japan has started in all our minds a chain of reflections so unpleasant that few of us have ventured to follow it up in public. Parliament consigned it to a secret session and the rest of us relapsed into an embarrassed silence. The reasons for this helpless anxiety are obvious enough. We have relied almost exclusively on sea-power for the defence of our interests in the East and it happens that the Navy is fully occupied, because it must fight alone and simultaneously in home waters and in the Mediterranean. Australia and New Zealand lack the population to furnish an adequate army and we have never chosen to develop fully the unlimited resources of India. We have been content, since the Mutiny, to draw our troops only from a few races to which we chose to attribute a monopoly of the martial virtues. It suited us to forget that before 1858 we had recruited our Sepoys largely from Bengalis, and that the Mahrattas were the dominant military power in the Peninsula when we set out to conquer it.

A narrow view of our own interests had dictated throughout the last century an economic policy which treated India as a source of raw materials and neglected or discouraged the development of modern industry. While textile manufactures grew slowly, the basic heavy industries have only recently begun to establish themselves: a chemical industry was started only the other day and all machinery has still to be imported. This neglect is the chief of several causes that account for the sub-human poverty of the Indian masses, crowded and under-employed as they are upon the land. The rapid industrialisation of India is the surest expedient for raising its pitiable standard of life. But an urgent, self-regarding reason makes as strongly for this reversal of traditional views: if India possessed a modern industrial equipment, the prospect of defending not India alone but the whole Middle East and the South Seas would be incomparably more hopeful than it is to-day. This vast and opulent region, with Egypt, Irak and the Dutch islands within its confines, could become from the army's standpoint self-sufficient, if the undeveloped resources of India could be fully utilised.

What has stood in the way? Partly a shortsighted calculation, which preferred that India should remain a backward land of peasants. Partly political distrust. These two explanations, if we dare to think realistically, fuse into one. We should not hesitate to trust Indians of all races with arms, if India were reconciled. The ultimate reason why it refuses to be reconciled, is that it explains to itself its own subjection by tracing it to our economic motives. It knows that its literate proletariat lacks work, while its villagers are idle through five months of the year, because for our own gain we have held back its industrial development. The folly of this short-sighted egoism is evident to-day. Our danger has compelled us to realise that all our interests in this wide area depend on a military victory which a contented and less backward India could assure.

Once again, at Poona last week, the National Congress, which has proved that it has behind it about 70 per cent. of the Indian electorate, has made us an offer of its entire collaboration in the conduct of this war—on terms. Its support is indispensable. Without it, a large army of mercenaries can no doubt be recruited from selected strata of the population. But only with it could we raise an army that would fight with conviction, or draw officers from the more intelligent and self-respecting sections of its manhood. Without it, we could no doubt set its profiteers to manufacture for us at a price. But the reorganisation of the economic life of India which is even more urgent in war than in peace could be achieved only through a return to office of the Congress ministries in the provinces. If the subordination of every interest to victory requires the support of Labour in Britain, much more does it require the backing and indeed the direction of Congress in India. It is unthinkable in an atmosphere of political dissension and recurring strikes, when the politically minded part of the population awaits from day to day the signal to embark on a campaign of passive resistance.

Congress has stated its terms. It asks us to concede its ideal of "independence." Words play in this protracted dispute a more than usually mischievous part. Because we made an undated promise of Dominion Status which we were in no hurry to define or fulfil, the phrase is now an irritant to Indians. On our side few of us like "independence" any better. We are "realists" who understand that in this jungle of a world India can be no more truly independent than Lithuania, until she can defend herself unaided. Independence implies the possession of a great mechanised army: in other words, it is a function of industrial and financial power. This Indians have been slow to understand. But at Poona they took the first step towards this realism, by rejecting Mr. Gandhi's unwordly faith that India could meet invasion by his pacifist technique. What in fact they mean by independence is not so much the right to act beyond their own frontiers as the fullest self-determination, the right to choose their own governors, and to draw the ground plan of their own future life and growth. Unless we are ready to concede this, we must face the fact that we are engaged in a daily conquest of this Peninsula. That is to attempt a task as far below our moral standards as it is beyond our powers.

Indians have been too chivalrous to use our danger as their opportunity, nor do they ask us for a final settlement until peace returns. Their immediate demand is simple and bold—the creation at the centre of a provisional national government, responsible to the elected members of the All-India Legislative Assembly. That formula conveys its own meaning. The ministers who would govern from Delhi would have to be the trusted leaders of this nation, and not tame yes-men. It is also clear that some Muslims whom their co-religionists respect must sit among them. The Congress ministries would then resume office in their provinces, and with their support the Central Government would direct the war-effort of a reconciled nation in a new atmosphere of self-reliance and hope. It would also set to work to draft the new Constitution, which it would ultimately lay before a Constituent Assembly. It would inevitably have to negotiate over some of its chapters, notably defence, with the British Government. The final relationship of India with the British Commonwealth, which must be one of mutual helpfulness, would most naturally be determined, as that of Eire was, by treaty.

Every argument of prudence and political morality makes for the acceptance of some such settlement as this. The statement which Mr. Amery read to the House on Thursday is in some respects an improvement on anything that came from Lord Zetland, but it is still in our view seriously inadequate and we fear that it will not achieve the reconciliation of India. Its good points deserve, none the less, to be underlined. Its tone is friendly and it avoids the magisterial manner that Indians specially resent. It frankly faces the fact that the gulf between Congress and the Muslim League cannot now be bridged. It abandons the disastrous policy of using their disagreement as an excuse for indefinite delays. What the British Government will grant, it gives at once without exacting unanimity among Indians as a preliminary condition. There is also an advance in the terms of the promise of the future Constitution, for we take its meaning to be that a representative body of Indians shall draw it up, following a procedure of their own choosing. That is a real advance, though we hold that this representative body should be got together before the end of the war.

What disappoints us are the concessions offered at once as an earnest of our intention to grant self-government. They repeat Lord Zetland's terms and involve no surrender of authority. Certain representative Indians will be invited to join the Viceroy's Council. But they will not be in any sense of the word a provisional National Government, nor will they be responsible to any elected body. They will sit merely as distinguished individuals whom the Viceroy may invite to express opinions which he will be free to disregard. The advisory committee that will be summoned from time to time to talk about the war can have no constitutional function whatever. Finally, we regret the wording of the clause inserted to reassure the minorities. It assures them that it will not hand them over to any system of government whose authority they deny, nor will it be a party to coercion. This places in the hands of the Muslim League and the feudal Princes a formidable right to veto the will of the Indian democracy. It repeats exactly what was said with fatal results to Ulster. It may well be that coercion would be unnecessary or impossible. But need we have said so with all the solemnity of a pledge?

We have stressed the direct military gains that would flow from a reconciled India. The political advantage is no less certain. On the day that Mr. Gandhi could broadcast over the ether his satisfaction that his people was free, we should acquire a new personality in the eyes both of Europe and America. Even M. Molotov would stammer, when next he felt tempted to accuse us of imperialist ambitions. We cannot lead a war of liberation in Europe, if a rebel India hangs about our neck.

It may turn out that our forebodings are unfounded. But we shall be surprised if this statement is accepted by Congress. Without its good will India cannot be reconciled.

THE LESSON OF EBBW VALE

EVER since the war started economists and business executives have called attention to the character of the controls over industry set up by the Chamberlain Government and, for the most part, maintained by its successor. These controls—of which not the least interesting are the Iron and Steel and Aluminium controls—consist almost exclusively of men drawn from the great combines, which were formed in the post-1918 period for the express purpose of maintaining profits by eliminating competition and restricting production. It has frequently been pointed out that both natural bias and loyalty to the shareholders they represent may make such men unwilling either to expand production rapidly or to permit a proper pooling of patents and processes. They are bound to be loth to encourage the development, in particular, of new processes, which will put any obsolescent plant they possess out of business. In brief, a Government control manned by such persons may easily retard the necessary changes from a peacetime economy of artificial scarcity to a wartime economy of planned and expanding production.

Up till now such criticisms have fallen on deaf ears. But the bitter controversy between Sir William Firth and the Control Committee of the Richard Thomas Company which owns the huge Ebbw Vale steel plant has revealed certain facts which a conscientious Government must surely consider seriously. At least the public should be fully informed about them.

The story of the Ebbw Vale works is a significant sequel to the tragedy of Jarrow. South Wales in the last century had a virtual monopoly of steel sheet and tin plate production, and the trade maintained its prosperity till the early 'twenties. Then American research developed a new type of mill in which the steel could be rolled in wide continuous strips, and to-day two dozen such plants are working in the U.S.A. Other countries followed suit and in the slump of 1930 South Wales was rapidly losing its export trade to the mills of the U.S.A., Germany and Japan; and British motor car manufacturers openly admitted both the superiority and the reduced cost of the foreign product produced under the new process.

At this point Sir William Firth enters the story. A man of exuberant vitality and a crude pioneer spirit, reminiscent of the epoch when capitalists were men of enterprise, he set his heart on building a modern plant in England. As chairman of Richard Thomas and Co., he controlled a very large number of steel and tin-plate undertakings and was a strong advocate of cartelisation, warmly supporting the foundation of the Iron and Steel Federation in 1934. But Sir William was convinced that, if Britain was to preserve her existing exports and regain her lost markets, she must adopt the new techniques. Soon after the foundation of the Federation, therefore, he proposed that a modern steel plant should be erected co-operatively by members of the Federation most closely concerned with the sheet steel industry. Among these were Baldwins and Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds, two firms connected by family association with our last two Premiers. Ten millions was the sum he suggested should be raised. His proposal was unanimously turned down: "What has been good enough for our fathers is good enough for us," was his colleagues' attitude: and when Sir William referred to unemployment, one of them is reported to have remarked testily: "You are always talking about unemployment. Are you a Socialist?"

Sir William was not a Socialist, but a bold *entrepreneur*. When his colleagues in the Federation refused to co-operate, he decided that Richard Thomas' should do the job alone, and chose as the most economic site for the mill Redbourne in Lincolnshire. At this there was an outcry in South Wales, and both Earl Baldwin and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald later took credit for persuading Sir William to choose the site in Ebbw Vale, which, though from a business point of view possibly less suitable, was strategically safer and more socially beneficial. So Sir William accepted Ebbw Vale, though the Government refused to take any responsibility in the matter.

In January, 1937, the public were offered the chance of investing in this new venture, and some £5½ millions were subscribed. Richard Thomas' share capital was now round about £15 millions. Work began in 1937 and by the spring of 1939, a few months before the outbreak of war, Ebbw Vale possessed a mill 2½ miles long and ¾ mile wide. Here in 5 miles of continuous process the rough ore was turned into steel sheets and tin plate by 25,000 workers. The new plant is calculated to reduce costs of production by up to 40 per cent.

But between the beginning and completion of the works much had happened. When Sir William decided to carry on in spite of his colleagues' refusal to co-operate, he was challenging the powers that be. Several powerful companies might be seriously hit if the Ebbw Vale mills ever got into full production and rendered their plant practically obsolete. What exactly happened between 1937 and 1939 is not yet clear: there are allegations and counter-allegations, but there were certainly long delays in the delivery of the steel plant for the erection of the works. The Imports Duties Advisory Committee, which works closely with the Iron and Steel Federation, pressed Sir William to use British castings in the construction of the plant. He agreed reluctantly, and when deliveries were many months overdue, was forced after all to import some from America. Complaints about other delays were made, with the reply that rearmament must have priority. On the other hand, Sir William's advisers were guilty of serious miscalculations, and these, combined with an unexpected outcrop of rock near the surface, increased labour costs and the mysterious delays already mentioned, brought Richard Thomas into serious financial difficulties. At one point Sir William found himself compelled to take the unusual course of writing a letter to the shareholders, denying any truth in the rumours circulated in the City that there were cracks in the reservoir at the top of the valley. But the City was scared and by the spring of 1938 share values had slumped by 12 millions. Sir William had been relying on a very considerable overdraft from the bank. In April the bank demanded an examination into the affairs of the company, which was conducted by Mr. James, Chairman of Lancashire Steel and a firm of chartered accountants. Their report declared that he needed not £2½ millions more to complete the work, but £6 millions. In view of this report, the bank, not unnaturally, said that it must withdraw the overdraft. It should be noted that Sir William now asserts that nothing like £6 millions was spent on the completion of the work and that a large amount of the money advanced at 4½ per cent. is now lying idle on deposit.

At this point Mr. Montagu Norman enters the story. So large was the sum involved that the Bank of England had to be consulted, and there was a natural link as Sir Andrew Duncan, then Chairman of the Iron and Steel Federation, was also a director of the Bank of England. A plan was evolved by which £6 millions was advanced on two conditions. In the first place, a Control Committee should be established with complete power to appoint and dismiss directors of Richard Thomas. On this Control Committee were Mr. Montagu Norman, Sir William Firth, Lord Greenwood, President of the Iron and Steel Federation and Chairman of Dorman Long, and Mr. Lever, of the Prudential. Secondly, Mr. James, of Lancashire Steel, Sir Charles Wright, of Baldwins, and Mr. Beale, of Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds, were appointed directors of Richard Thomas, one of their chief competitors.

It is difficult to understand how anyone could imagine that this new control would work harmoniously. Men whose plant might be rendered partially obsolescent by the Ebbw Vale mills were to co-operate with Sir William Firth, their old rival. It is not surprising that from then on there were continual rumours of quarrels both on the Board of Richard Thomas and in the Control Committee, and a good many changes of personnel. It is reported that when war started orders were given to stop production in Ebbw Vale, owing to the uncertainties of the national emergency, and were cancelled on the same day by the irate Sir William. Finally, last winter a new Managing Director was appointed, Mr. G. H. Latham, Chairman of Whitehead Iron and Steel of Newport. In February, while Sir William was abroad on confidential Government business, Mr. Latham dismissed some of the Richard Thomas staff and also put forward a plan for the purchase of a certain company by Richard Thomas. When Sir William returned, he disagreed violently with both these actions of Mr. Latham, and a difference of opinion on the Board resulted. The Control Committee pressed him to resign voluntarily, but he refused to do so and threatened full publicity if they forced matters to a head. He was as good as his word, and at the meeting a fortnight ago the shareholders of Richard Thomas were able to listen to a speech whose allegations are so serious that we cannot print them here in full.

There is a danger that judgment on the Ebbw Vale case will be too deeply influenced by the personality of Sir William Firth. The general public are not concerned with the personal feuds on the Control Committee or on the Board of Richard Thomas: they are concerned with the lessons which the Minister of Supply might learn from Ebbw Vale, if he were willing to give it his attention. For the Iron and Steel Controller, Sir Charles Wright, of Baldwins, who is nominally under the Ministry of Supply, is also chairman of that Iron and Steel Federation whose leading members opposed the erection of the plant, and in 1938, owing to Sir William's financial difficulties, obtained a stranglehold on the Ebbw Vale scheme.

What we must ask ourselves is whether this type of steel control is well fitted to operate the steel sector of our war economy on the Government's behalf; whether Mr. Montagu Norman and Mr. Lever, of the Prudential, despite their financial expertise, are the men best qualified to control the biggest steel plant in the country. No doubt these gentlemen are all sincerely convinced that they have acted in the interests of the nation. But is their view of the nation's interests likely to be that most suited to the needs of an expanding war economy? Can they possibly, high as their moral integrity is, keep in completely separate compartments the interests of the great industries they represent in one capacity, and the interests of the country which they represent in another? Sir William Firth's allegations, if they were proved, would show that this has not been possible. They are not proven at present and it is deplorable that last Wednesday Herbert Morrison brushed aside all idea of a public enquiry, and expressed his satisfaction with the existing arrangements of control in the steel industry. Mr. Morrison added that he could not pursue disputes into the capitalist world . . . or divert his energies from the field of production into this particular argument. This is plain nonsense. Mr. Morrison should not imagine that a study of Ebbw Vale will be a diversion of his energies from their main task. A real understanding of what has happened there between 1937 and 1940 would make him far better fitted to pursue disputes into the capitalist world, and that, after all, is precisely the job of a Minister of Supply, not to mention of a Socialist.

A LONDON DIARY

THE reception of M. Molotov's speech in this country was a good deal more sympathetic than anyone would have expected six months ago. I am sure he meant exactly what he said. Russia will stay out of the Western European war and maintain her friendly relations with Germany. As for ourselves, his reference to our *bad* relations is taken, I find, as a tribute to Sir Stafford Cripps' diplomacy. Before his arrival in Moscow, we had no relations with Russia; and even bad relations are an improvement on no relations at all. Less attention was paid to a declaration of the Third International released a few days before M. Molotov's speech in Stockholm and a few other capitals where capitalist democracy still permits a free press. In this declaration M. Dimitrov denounced Hitler's New European Order and the " Diktat of Compiegne " in terms almost identical with those employed by British propagandists broadcasting to Germany. The peoples of Europe, he declared with the utmost vigour, must liberate themselves from the Nazi plutocrats. In this declaration the Third International, as usual, voiced the alternative policy of the U.S.S.R. Should Hitler meet with a reverse, M. Molotov might yet speak with the voice of M. Dimitrov; a competition may yet ensue between the Third International and Great Britain, each trying to incite Germany to revolution according to its own pattern! Such a competition has already begun in France, where the Communists, who are skilled in underground work, are extremely active, while the rest of the Socialists and Republicans in opposition to the Vichy Government are impotent. British propaganda in France is still bewildered: the Germans are now attacking the Vichy Government, which rather takes the wind out of the British sails. But the correct line, I am sure, is to do straight anti-Fascist propaganda in France. No reason to leave that to the Communists.

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How much is being done to make the various foreign legions and all the foreign workers in this country feel that this is not merely a war for the British Empire but for British freedom? I am constantly hearing fresh instances of our total failure even to try to win the support of French soldiers and sailors. A French merchant ship, for instance, arrived at Glasgow: its crew of forty was immediately thrown into jail. Then it was transferred to an internment camp near London where they are living under canvas, idle and embittered. No effort was made to enlist the support of the men nor were British seamen from the Seamen's Union encouraged to get on to friendly terms with them. Look at the contrast of the Norwegian seamen. Here contact was made at once between the two Unions and there are now 40,000 Norwegian seamen helping in the war-effort. Last week the Workers' Educational Association and the Norwegian Seamen's Union held the first of a series of " socials." Two hundred men crammed a small hall and the W.E.A. showed a film, prepared by its members, of Scandinavian democracy after an excellent and very informal speech by the King of Norway. That meeting showed what could be done for the men who are cut off from their homes in the battle for Europe. And I think it has a moral. The real spirit which will challenge and overthrow National Socialism will come not from the governments but from the peoples themselves. The Norwegian seamen are our allies because of the international solidarity of the seamen's unions. The W.E.A. can organise socials for them because of the intimate connection between the Scandinavian and the British adult education movements. The British Council may serve a limited purpose, but it is far too grandiose and aloof to create the comradeship we need in this war. Had the Government given our Trade Unions the job of handling the French sailors, how different the results would have been from the present deplorable position.

* * *

I was talking last week-end to a skilled engineer about the problem of " absenteeism." He was telling me that in his town the strain is beginning to tell and that where rest-days were not provided, they were just taken by a good many workers. He himself is convinced that we should not try to emulate the U.S.S.R. by abolishing Sunday and substituting a staggered day of rest once a week. But he made what seems to me an excellent suggestion, that a campaign should be conducted urging that everyone should do something on Sunday for the national effort different from his or her weekly routine. " Lord Halifax," he remarked, " will suggest church-going and will be joined by many. Other people may be more useful out of doors." There are still acres of land within reach of our industrial centres which could be turned into allotments; and my friend is convinced from personal experience that six days in the aircraft shops and one on the allotment is the ideal life. A change, in his view, is as good as a rest.

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I hope that plenty of secondary schools will enter for the holiday task arranged by *The 1940 Council*, a new body anxious to promote rational ideas of social planning. The suggestion is that each school, or if it is preferred individual children, should make a survey of the district. They should consider the purpose which their town or village serves, why its site was selected, whether its original purpose has changed, how it has been affected by the war; how people earn their living, how they travel to their jobs, how they are housed and spend their leisure, and so on. This sounds a really excellent piece of democratic education for the hundreds of secondary schools which will be staying open this summer, and find themselves hard put to it to find a variety of occupation for the children. Let *The 1940 Council* beware, however, of the *Daily Herald*, which may well suggest that Mr. Duff Cooper is behind the scheme and promoting a junior Gestapo!

* * *

One of the most curious parts of our social system is the real solicitude with which we have catered for the unusual habits of the tramp. The vagrants are a tiny class, but an elaborate system of " casual wards " has been arranged at convenient walking distance from one another, so that the tramp can make his tours more easily than a hiker who relies on youth hostels. Some people forget that the tramp has to work for his night's rest, and, like a schoolboy, pay the penalty for idleness by being " kept in." I have often wondered what had happened to the tramps in wartime, and was interested to hear that the Home Office has been so busy locking up anti-Nazi refugees that it has left the vagrants undisturbed, though you would have thought the Casual Ward System, for which the ratepayer pays the bill, offered the most perfect facilities for a Fifth Column! I am not surprised, therefore, that the Coventry Public Assistance Committee has taken the matter up. It suggests that on an appointed day all casual wards should be closed, and the tramps become from that day inmates of the Institution where they happen to be. All who are capable of work should then be placed in employment under the Emergency Powers Act. I thought this rather drastic until I heard something of what is going on. One Friday a few weeks ago nine men under 30 were admitted as casuals who were clearly evading the Military Service Act, while of the 385 admitted during June in Coventry, 29 had no identity cards and the police, when the matter was reported, stated that they had no power of action. But I should have a sentimental regret if the last symbol of liberty, the useless tribe of tramps, were finally abolished.

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I spoke last week of a " few local authorities " sacking C.O.s and so destroying the spirit of Mr. Chamberlain's appeal at the beginning of the war against the policy of victimising conscience. Mr. Tom Harrisson informs me that Mass-Observation has done a detailed report on this whole problem. Apparently I over-estimated the

number of wise local authorities and under-estimated the foolish ones. During the period from May 11th to June 7th seventy-two councils voted for dismissal and only fifteen voted against it. Since then the debate has been going on all over the country and bigotry has, I fear, been on the increase. Where voting figures are available they reveal a considerable minority against victimisation even in areas which adopt the dismissal policy; Conservative councils more often dismiss than Labour councils, but there are too many exceptions to make a rule and much of the responsibility for the shabby business of making the C.O.'s life intolerable by persistent pressure falls, I am sorry to say, on Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies.

* * *

Though the British have faced threats of invasion in the past, we usually imagine that aerial invasion is a novelty. Not a bit of it. Here are the opening stanzas of a poem called *The French Are Coming*, which takes us back to the first balloon period. It is printed anonymously in *War Songs* in the Canterbury Posts series:

The French are all coming, for so they declare,
Of their floats and balloons all the papers advise us;
They're to swim through the ocean and ride on the air,
On some foggy ev'ning to land and surprise us.
Their army's to come and plant liberty's tree,
Call'd the army of England, what matchless presumption!

Let them come; those who meet not with agues at sea,
Will on shore, first get fevers, and then a consumption;
Poor fools! by the finger of fate they're invited;
For our freedom and laws,
Come on in this cause,
They no longer are Britons, who are not united.

The old women and children report such strange things
Of their grand preparations, their routs, and their rackets;
One army, they tell us, is furnished with wings,
And another's accoutred, they say, in cork jackets; . . .

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of the column goes this week to Noel Y. Sandwith.

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1.

BRITISH WAR AIMS

If Sir E. Hume-Williams's excellent suggestion is carried out it is of the greatest importance that no categorical commitments are made to any country. Great Britain is almost unique in keeping its promises—sometimes to its own detriment.—Letter in the *Times*.

I've killed Communism and the Fascists in this town and I intend to stop anything else that may be tried to persuade people to express their views, however patriotic the real motive may be.—Chief Constable of Derby, reported in the *Daily Mail*.

Great Britain to-day was the modern development of ancient Israel and the angels were watching over them.

Their history pointed to the fact that they were Israel, to whom the Lord once said "I shall curse them that curse thee." No nation got away with it after Britain had been cursed. Philip of Spain cursed Britain, and so had Napoleon, the Kaiser, Hitler and Goering. Yet people still asked "Will Britain be invaded"?—Mr. William Whitton quoted in the *Midland Daily Tribune*.

The teaching of the Bible is collected here with the necessary explanation. Nearly all the evidence comes from the Old Testament: much in the New Testament that is relied on by pacifists is really irrelevant.—Advertisement for *War—What Does the Bible Say?*

The Earl of Rosebery's horse, Blue Peter, the winner of last year's Derby, recently left the Mentmore Stud, near Leighton Buzzard, for a short stay in Dorset. He will return to Mentmore in the autumn.—*Daily Telegraph*.

Representations for more staff are being made to the Prison Commissioners on behalf of warders, who say they are being overworked acting as "waiters and waitresses" to wealthy Fascists and internees detained under the Defence Regulations.

"These people are allowed to order extra food and drink from outside the prisons, and have a great deal of latitude in receiving visitors. Several big West End firms have contracts to supply these people, and as some of them are wealthy, they are having many of the good things of life, including fair quantities of champagne."—*Nottingham Evening Post*.

The Germans would welcome our constant use of Beethoven's music. It would line up with the rest of their propaganda. It would suggest to them a "softness" among us, a soft spot in our hearts for something of German origin. That is what they aim at in all their propaganda—a weakening, in any and every direction, of our resolve.—*Sound Wave*.

A DANGEROUS DECISION

No measure since the Churchill Government took office last May has given greater general satisfaction than the Act by which the Government took full powers to conscript all persons and all property for the service of the nation. It was felt that at last the Government had seen the problem of organising the community for war in its full proportions. Parliament applauded Mr. Attlee vigorously when he emphasised that no vested interests were to stand in the way of our effort. Mr. Churchill lent the full weight of his authority to the principle.

Parliament proposes, and, evidently, the Court disposes. Under the authority conferred upon him, the Minister of Supply took over a factory engaged in a branch of munitions work. His representatives were sent there to carry out his orders. But the owner asked the Court of Chancery for an injunction against the Minister on the ground that it was unreasonable for him to be committed to liabilities over which he had no control. This was, he argued in effect, an unreasonable taking of property. The Attorney-General replied that, if this view was accepted, the whole purpose of the Act would be stultified: he agreed that the owner might be entitled to compensation for any contingent loss. But he very properly insisted that it was the clear intention of Parliament to vest in the Minister of Supply a full discretionary power to take over any undertaking when, in his judgment, the national interest required it. Mr. Justice Bennett, however, granted the injunction, subject, of course, to an appeal. He decided that it could not have been the intention of Parliament to permit action by a Minister which jeopardised the property of the owner.

It is difficult to imagine a more serious position than that which must arise unless, whether on appeal or by Parliamentary action, this decision is reversed. Practically, this injunction means that no power taken under this Act is valid unless the Minister can convince the Courts that it has been "reasonably" taken; and Mr. Justice Bennett's view of "reasonableness" seems to be that it must not threaten the interest an owner has in the preservation of his property. The Minister's interpretation of the national interest must be read in this context. His view can only prevail if he can persuade the Courts to accept his interpretation of the national interest.

Mr. Justice Bennett is not, of course, importing a new canon of statutory construction into the Common Law. He is using a vast body of traditional doctrine to protect property from any invasion by Parliament. He is arguing, as our judges have argued for several hundred years, that, unless the words of a statute permit no other meaning, it must be taken as the clear intention of Parliament to safeguard the rights of property-owners from invasion by the State. He is using that science of interpretation of which, many years ago, Sir Frederick Pollock wrote that "some of its rules cannot be accounted for except on the theory that Parliament generally changes the law for the worse, and that the business of the judges is to keep the mischief of its interference within the narrowest possible bounds."

It is difficult in a brief space to comment adequately on the implications of this decision. The Act was intended to secure the most efficient production at the maximum speed; the decision means that both depend, not on the view for which the Minister can get the support of Parliament, but on his ability to secure the approval of the judges. The Act had a profound effect on public opinion, since it seemed to show that the interests of property no less than the interests of persons were to be mobilised for the national effort; the decision means that the interests of property can only be mobilised within a framework acceptable to the Courts.

Mr. Justice Bennett, in fact, is proceeding in exactly the same way as the Supreme Court of the United States is accustomed to do when its majority strikes down legislation which interferes with its own notions of the rights of property; his decision is comparable to those in which the Court threw out so much of the major programme of the New Deal. In the United States, the technique is called "judicial review," in Great Britain its more indirect form is called "statutory construction." The result, in both cases, is to make the Courts, directly or indirectly, the masters of the legislature.

It cannot be too emphatically said that the Act which Mr. Attlee sponsored means nothing at all if it denies to the Minister of Supply the control he exercised in this case. Its intent was the unmistakable intent of preventing vested interests standing in the way of victory. Nobody has suggested—and certainly the Courts would not suggest—that Mr. Bevin's Order prohibiting strikes for the duration of the war is not binding upon the trade unions, even though it will certainly

deprive many wage-earners of increases they could have won by this means. But Mr. Justice Bennett tells us that the Act prevents Mr. Morrison from taking over a business if its owner can suggest that he is, thereby, deprived of control in his property. There is, it appears, one rule for the sale of a workman's labour-power and another rule for the sale of munitions to the Government. Is it any wonder that thousands of trade unionists in this country are sceptical of the doctrine that men are equal before the law?

Let us admit that Mr. Morrison's power is a discretionary one, and that he must exercise it "reasonably." Surely "reasonable" exercise can only mean that he and his experts have arrived at their decision after carefully weighing the facts. It cannot mean that they are so to weigh them that the owner of the factory agrees with their decision. It cannot mean, either, that, in running his factory after it has been taken over, they can secure the owner's approval for the decisions they take; if it meant either of these, there would be no point in conferring the discretionary power. Mr. Justice Bennett is, in fact, maintaining round the rights of owners the network of protection which it was the intent of the Act to break through. That network of protection is a construction imported into the Act from traditions of the Common Law which belong to the long out-worn era of the negative State. No Court would be likely to apply it to the protection of those personal liberties which have been so widely invaded by the Home Office. Property is put in a special category.

No doubt, Mr. Morrison will appeal against this dangerous decision; and, if he cannot get redress from the Courts, we hope he will go without delay to Parliament for his remedy. For when Parliament passed the Act whose meaning has now been narrowed into a pale wraith of its proclaimed purpose, we were told that all of us, with our persons and our property, stood at the disposal of the nation for victory. That is what we understood; and that is what we applauded. We did not understand that, so soon as ministerial hands descended upon property, the Courts would declare them unsanctified hands. Even a lawyer will understand that the public will not approve the maintenance of privileges for one class in the community which, in the hour of danger, other classes have been proud to forgo.

OVER THE STILE

THERE are men who are born with a genius for helping lame dogs over stiles. Many people wish well to their fellows, but not so many have that energy of well-wishing that is impatient till it has transformed itself into action. When I read the obituary of Ladbroke Black in the *Times* the other day, my memory went back nearly forty years, and I began to wonder whether ever since then I had met a man who possessed that enviable energy in a more lavish degree. Black was not only a man who helped lame dogs over stiles: he pushed them, and if necessary carried them, over stiles.

When I met him first, I was living in a studio with a young painter with whom he had made friends in Paris. He took the place by storm one evening, and he took me by storm. Hardly had we left the studio on our way to the Pembroke Arms when he had found out that I was nominally a journalist but in fact doing next to nothing. He had himself been recently appointed associate editor of Jerome K. Jerome's old paper, *To-day*, and immediately asked me to send in contributions to a feature entitled "Club Chatter." I protested that I had never been in a London club in my life, and that Pub Chatter was more in my line. "That'll do all right, old chap," he said; "we're a democratic paper." The charming thing about it was that, when he gave me his invitation, he did not even know whether I could string two sentences together. He knew only that I was not earning what, for some reason or other, is called a bean. And how patiently he published the stuff I wrote! Sometimes, when subjects in the contemporary world failed me, I would call at a free library, pull out one of the drawers containing the card index, and pick a book at random. In this way I came on the record of a savage tribe who ate sand, and, as a fashionable clubman, told the readers of *To-day* about it under the misleading heading, "The Dirt-eaters." "I should go easy on the dirt-eaters, old chap," said Black with a laugh when I met him next. But he never rejected a paragraph.

Calling one evening a week before the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race, he said to me: "I want you to do a sketch of the boat-race. We go to press before the race, but you can do it from your imagination." I demurred on the ground that I had never seen the boat-race, but he said that all that was needed was a description of the crowd. There was never a man more ignorant than he of the meaning of the word "impossible," and at last I found myself sitting up all night trying to imagine how a crowd of Londoners (about whom I knew nothing) behaved at a boat-race I had never seen and to put it down on paper. I remember inventing an old lady with the improbable name of Mrs. Flapdoodle and a number of back-chatting Cockneys who made jokes about noses and the size of people's feet. I re-wrote it several times and every time I re-wrote it, it became more witless and worse. I do not wish to boast, but I should say it was the most gloom-inspiring attempt at facetiousness ever written. Even Black's charity could not disguise from him the fact that his co-editor was right in refusing to print it. "Try again, old chap," he said; and, when I answered him with an article on street-preachers that his co-editor, Frank Rutter, liked, he took advantage of this to push me on to the staff of the paper at a salary—that then seemed millionairish—of two pounds a week.

And even that did not content him. Charging into the studio one evening, he said that he had an idea for a series of short stories on which we might collaborate. Messrs. Horlick of the Malted Milk were about to produce a magazine, edited by that great authority on magic, A. E. Waite, and he thought there was a good chance of placing a series of stories with them. He suggested Napoleon III as a subject, and asked me to write a scenario of the first story, to be submitted to the editor. I told him that I did not know anything about Napoleon III: the fact is, I did not even know what relation he was to the great Napoleon. "That's all right, old chap," he said, sweeping my objections aside; "I'll send you a book about him."

Two days later I had read enough of Archibald Colquhoun's biography to construct an extremely improbable plot for a historical story. To my surprise the series was commissioned and even printed. Again I do not wish to boast, but I am ready to maintain that those stories I wrote—we wrote not in collaboration but alternately—were among the worst short stories ever written. Black's, on the other hand, were excellent, for not only did he know the subject but he had a natural gift for story-telling. A friend of mine, later to be famous as a literary critic, discovered the stories one evening where I had hidden them and, after reading them, said: "You know you ought to have gone on with fiction. Those stories of yours are first-rate. I could tell which ones were yours at once." "Which do you think are mine?" I asked; and I discovered, not to my surprise, that the three he had chosen as the good ones were Black's.

The next job Black found for me was the re-writing of the autobiography of an ex-convict. The ex-convict had sold his manuscript to two publishers, and the publisher who was the slower to get into print wanted the whole thing to be put into different English so that it might appear to be a new and original book. That was my first appearance in volume form. Next, Black discovered that the same publisher wanted someone to turn a veterinary manual by a horse-trainer into grammatical English, and pushed me into the job. The book, as the horse-trainer had written it, seemed to me almost meaningless; and I have no doubt that it was still more meaningless by the time I had finished with it. I have in my time revised two veterinary manuals. I must have puzzled many a young farmer trying to learn from a book how to break a horse. I trust that not too many serious accidents happened as a result.

As an editor, Black had only one fault. He was so restlessly energetic that he liked all copy to be in, not only punctually, but a considerable time before it was needed. I have often trembled as I lay in bed in my Hampstead lodgings on the morning of going-to-press day and heard him rushing up the stairs to put the inevitable question: "Got your article finished?" "It's under weigh," I would quaver from beneath the blankets. "You mean you've got the title written," he would say, disgustedly. Then, suddenly, the reign-of-terror frown would vanish, and he would leave the room laughing at his own perspicacity and at the hopelessness and helplessness of his friends.

I may say that I was not the only lame dog whom he took under his care. There were three of us from Belfast alone whom he thrust into jobs, though, I fancy, he half-suspected that each of us was like the man of whom it was said that he was "always looking for work and praying to God that he wouldn't find it." He also dragged a man on his uppers whom he had known at Cambridge on to the paper to write about men's fashions in clothes. It was enough to be a lame dog or a lost dog for Black to rush around trying to help you and usually succeeding in doing so. On one occasion the object of his charitable energies was a girl in her teens whom, in the spirit of Mr. Gladstone, he set out to rescue from the life of a street-walker. I knew of this only because he sent for me one morning, when he was ill with influenza, and asked me to take his place and buy the girl

some clothes she needed and a single ticket to the town in which her parents lived and to which she had promised to return. He gave me the money for the clothes and the ticket, and that evening at Euston Station I waved the girl good-bye. Alas, within a week, as I was crossing Piccadilly Circus, I got a bow and a smile from an exceptionally pretty, weak-faced girl wearing a coat that I had helped to choose. I don't think I ever told Black of this failure of his charity.

A helper of others, he was not himself, I think, ambitious. Devoted though he was to literature, and proud though he was that his father was a poet who had talked with Wordsworth, he believed that the important thing in life is, not the pursuit of art, but doing whatever job offers itself, were it only painting a poster or writing a penny dreadful. And, when he worked, as when he walked, he had the energy of an athlete. Going for a walk with him, you always felt that, if his impatient shoulders had had their way, you would have been walking three times as fast. As for work, he could dictate twenty thousand words a day walking up and down a room.

As I remember him, I cannot help thinking that Blake was right as regards the pleasures of energy. Black overflowed with it—in devotion to his family, in devotion to his friends, in hospitality to his guests, and in his love of walks that now seem to me to have been master-feats of pedestrianism. A mixture of Yorkshireman and Irishman, he was at once generously impulsive and careful. I remember how impulsively he rushed to the defence of Colonel Lynch, sentenced to death for treason after the Boer War, and demanded the remission of the sentence: he was the first journalist to do so, though he had no sympathy with Colonel Lynch's politics. As for his carefulness, he was the only man I knew at the time who on principle saved a few shillings every week from his small income. He urged me to do the same; but, though he made me do many things, he could not make me do this. The odd thing is that, though he saved more money than anybody else, he spent more on other people than anybody else. He was obviously born with a special gift. I have often wondered what would have happened to me if I had never met him.

Y. Y.

UNWELCOME IDEA

ALONG Dublin Bay, on a sunny July morning, the public gardens along the Dalkey tramline look bright as a series of parasols. Chalk-blue sea appears at the ends of the roads of villas turning downhill—but these are still the suburbs, not the seaside. In the distance, floating across the bay, buildings glitter out of the heat-haze on the neck to Howth, and Howth Head looks higher veiled. After inland Ballsbridge, the tram from Dublin speeds up; it zooms through the residential reaches with the gathering steadiness of a launched ship. Its red velvet seating accommodation is seldom crowded—its rival, the quicker bus, lurches ahead of it down the same road.

After Ballsbridge, the ozone smell of the bay sifts more and more through the smell of chimneys and pollen and the July-darkened garden trees as the bay and line converge. Then at a point you see the whole bay open—there are nothing but flats of grass and the sunk railway between the running tram and the still sea. An immense glaring reflection floods through the tram. When high terraces, backs to the tramline, shut out the view again, even their backs have a salted, marine air: their cotton window-blinds are pulled half down, crooked; here and there an inner door left open lets you see a flash of sea through a house. The weathered lions on gate posts ought to be dolphins. Red low-lying villas have been fitted between earlier terraces, ornate, shabby, glassy hotels, bow-fronted mansions all built in the first place to stand up over spaces of grass. Looks from trams and voices from public gardens invade the old walled lawns with their grottos and weeping willows. Spit-and-polish alternates with decay. But stucco, slate and slate-fronts, blotched Italian pink-wash, dusty windows, lace curtains and dolphin-lions seem to be the eternity of this tram route. Quite soon the modern will sag, chip, fade. Change leaves everything at the same level. Nothing stays bright but mornings.

The tram slides to stops for its not many passengers. The Black-rock bottleneck checks it, then the Dun Laoghaire. These are the shopping centres strung on the line: their animation congests them. Housewives with burnt bare arms out of their cotton dresses mass blinking and talking among the halted traffic, knocking their shopping-bags on each others' thighs. Forgotten Protestant ladies from "rooms" near the esplanade stand squeezed between the kerb and the shops. A file of booted children threads its way through the crush, a nun at the head like a needle. Children by themselves curl their toes in their plimsoles and suck sweets and disregard everything. The goods stacked in the shops look very static and hot. Out from the tops of the shops on brackets stand a number of clocks. As though wrought up by the clocks the tram-driver smites his bell again and again, till the checked tram noses its way through.

By half-past eleven this morning one tram to Dalkey is not far on its way. All the time it approaches the Ballsbridge stop Mrs. Kearney looks undecided, but when it does pull up she steps aboard because she has seen no bus. In a slither of rather ungirt parcels, including a dress box, with a magazine held firmly between her teeth, she clutches her way up the stairs to the top. She settles herself on a velvet seat: she is hot. But the doors at each end and the windows are half open, and as the tram moves air rushes smoothly through. There are only four other people and no man smokes a pipe. Mrs. Kearney has finished wedging her parcels between her hip and the side of the tram and is intending to look at her magazine when she stares hard ahead and shows interest in someone's back. She moves herself and everything three seats up, leans forward and gives a poke at the back. "Isn't that you?" she says.

Miss Kevin jumps round so wholeheartedly that the brims of the two hats almost clash. "Why, for goodness' sake! . . . Are you on the tram?" She settled round in her seat with her elbow hooked over the back—it is bare and sharp, with a rubbed joint: she and Mrs. Kearney are of an age, and the age is about thirty-five. They both wear printed dresses that in this weather stick close to their backs; they are enthusiastic, not close friends but as close as they are ever likely to be. They both have high, fresh, pink colouring; Mrs. Kearney could do with a little less weight and Miss Kevin could do with a little more.

They agree they are out early. Miss Kevin has been in town for the July sales but is now due home to let her mother go out. She has parcels with her but they are compact and shiny, having been made up at the counters of shops. "They all say, buy now. You never know." She cannot help looking at Mrs. Kearney's parcels, bursting out from their string. "And aren't you very laden, also," she says.

"I tell you what I've been doing," says Mrs. Kearney. "I've been saying goodbye to my sister Maureen in Ballsbridge, and who knows how long it's to be for! My sister's off to County Cavan this morning with the whole of her family and the maid."

"For goodness' sake," says Miss Kevin. "Has she relatives there?"

"She has, but it's not that. She's evacuating. For the holidays they always go to Tramore, but this year she says she should evacuate." This brings Mrs. Kearney's parcels into the picture. "So she asked me to keep a few of her things for her." She does not add that Maureen has given her these old things, including the month-old magazine.

"Isn't it well for her," says Miss Kevin politely. "But won't she find it terribly slow down there?"

"She will, I tell you," says Mrs. Kearney. "However, they're all driving down in the car. She's full of it. She says we should all go somewhere where we don't live. It's nothing to her to shift when she has the motor. But the latest thing I hear they say now in the paper is that we'll be shot if we don't stay where we are. They say now we're all to keep off the roads—and there's my sister this morning with her car at the door. Do you think they'll halt her, Miss Kevin?"

"They might," says Miss Kevin. "I hear they're very suspicious. I declare, with the instructions changing so quickly it's better to take no notice. You'd be upside down if you tried to follow them all. It's of the first importance to keep calm, they say, and however would we keep calm doing this, then that? Still, we don't get half the instructions they get in England. I should think they'd really pity themselves. . . . Have you earth in your house, Mrs. Kearney? We have, we have three buckets. The warden's delighted with us: he says we're models. We haven't a refuge, though. Have you one?"

"We have a kind of a pump, but I don't know it is much good. And nothing would satisfy Fergus till he turned out the cellar."

"Well, you're very fashionable!"

"The contents are on the lawn, and the lawn's ruined. He's crazy," she says glumly, "with A.R.P."

"Aren't men very thorough," says Miss Kevin with a virgin detachment that is rather annoying. She has kept thumbing her sales parcels, and now she cannot resist undoing one. "Listen," she says, "isn't this a pretty delaine?" She runs the end of a fold between her finger and thumb. "It drapes sweetly. I've enough

for a dress and a bolero. It's French: they say we won't get any more now."

"And that Coty scent—isn't that French?"

Their faces flood with the glare struck from the sea as the tram zooms smoothly along the open reach—wall and trees on its inland side, grass and bay on the other. The tips of their shingles and the thoughts in their heads are for the minute blown about and refreshed. Mrs. Kearney flutters in the holiday breeze, but Miss Kevin is looking inside her purse. Mrs. Kearney thinks she will take the kids to the strand. "Are you a great swimmer, Miss Kevin?"

"I don't care for it: I've a bad circulation. It's a fright to see me go blue. They say now the sea's full of mines," she says, with a look at the great innocent bay.

"Ah, they're tethered; they'd never bump you."

"I'm not nervous at any time, but I take a terrible chill."

"My sister Maureen's nervous. At Tramore she'll never approach the water: it's the plage she enjoys. I wonder what will she do if they stop the car—she has all her plate with her in the back with the maid. And her kiddies are very nervous: they'd never stand it. I wish now I'd asked her to send me a telegram. Or should I telegraph her to know did she arrive? . . . Wasn't it you said we had to keep off the roads?"

"That's in the event of invasion, Mrs. Kearney. In the event of not it's correct to evacuate."

"She's correct all right, then," says Mrs. Kearney, with a momentary return to gloom. "And if nothing's up by the finish she'll say she went for the holiday, and I shouldn't wonder if she still went to Tramore. Still, I'm sure I'm greatly relieved to hear what you say. . . . Is that your father's opinion?"

Miss Kevin becomes rather pettish. "Him?" she says, "oh gracious, I'd never ask him. He has a great contempt for the whole war. My mother and I daren't refer to it—isn't it very mean of him? He does nothing but read the papers and roar away to himself. And will he let my mother or me near him when he has the news on? You'd think," Miss Kevin says with a clear laugh, "that the two of us originated the war to spite him: he doesn't seem to blame Hitler at all. He's really very unreasonable when he's not well. We'd a great fight to get in the buckets of earth, and now he makes out they're only there for the cat. And to hear the warden praising us makes him sour. Isn't it very mean to want us out of it all, when they say the whole of the country is drawn together. He doesn't take any pleasure in A.R.P."

"To tell you the truth I don't either," says Mrs. Kearney. "Isn't it that stopped Horse Show? Wouldn't that take the heart out of you—isn't that a great blow to national life? I never yet missed a Horse Show—Sheila was nearly born there. And isn't that a terrible blow to trade? I haven't the heart to look for a new hat. To my mind this war's getting very monotonous: all the interest of it is confined to a few. . . . Did you go to the Red Cross Fête?"

The tram grinds to a halt in Dun Laoghaire Street. Simultaneously Miss Kevin and Mrs. Kearney move up to the window ends of their seats and look closely down on the shop windows and shoppers. Town heat comes off the street in a quiver and begins to pervade the immobile tram. "I declare to goodness," exclaims Miss Kevin, "there's my same delaine! French, indeed! And watch the figure it's on—it would sicken you."

But with parallel indignation Mrs. Kearney has just noticed a clock. "Will you look at the time!" she says, plaintively. "Isn't this an awfully slow tram! There's my morning gone, and not a thing touched at home, from attending evacuations. It's well for her! She expected me on her step by ten—'It's a terrible parting,' she says on the p.c. But all she does at the last is to chuck the parcels at me, then keep me running to see had they the luncheon basket and what had they done with her fur coat. . . . I'll be off at the next stop, Miss Kevin dear. Will you tell your father and mother I was enquiring for them?" Crimson again at the very notion of moving, she begins to scrape her parcels under her wing. "Well," she says, "I'm off with the *objets d'art*." The heels of a pair of evening slippers protrude from a gap at the end of the dress box. The tram-driver, by smiting his bell, drowns any remark Miss Kevin could put out: the tram clears the crowd and moves down Dun Laoghaire Street, between high flights of steps, lace curtains, gardens with round beds. "Bye-bye, now," says Mrs. Kearney, rising and swaying.

"Bye-bye to you," says Miss Kevin. "Happy days to us all."

Mrs. Kearney, near the top of the stairs, is preparing to bite on the magazine. "Go on!" she says. "I'll be seeing you before then."

ELIZABETH BOWEN

SIR HENRY'S FAREWELL

ALTHOUGH obituary notices are usually written while their subjects are still alive, it is customary to keep them confidentially pigeon-holed until such time as the heroes are unable, or are confidently believed to be unable, to enjoy them. "De mortuis" was a bad, if kindly, rule; but when a man is not dead but on his death-bed, then indeed it is unbecoming to be brutally candid. And as with men, so with institutions—when they are as profoundly loved as the Proms have been. The Proms, the Henry Wood Proms, are about to die and this is certainly not the moment to review them from some lofty point of critical observation, to lash their artistic shortcomings and to assess in cold blood the nature and quality of the attitude to music of the special, and rather peculiar, public they have attracted. Yet the programmes of "Sir Henry Wood's Forty-Sixth and Farewell Season" (August 10th to October 5th) are so typical that one can hardly discuss them without inadvertently passing judgment on some of the main features of the whole institution.

Lector: Aren't you being a little previous? This is Sir Henry's farewell season but nobody has announced that this is the last season of Proms. Why shouldn't some younger man carry on the tradition?

Scriptor: These Proms are Wood's Proms. There had been "promenade concerts" in London before Wood conducted the first of Robert Newman's series at the then new Queen's Hall on August 10th, 1895, and no doubt promenade concerts of some sort, whether planned on Wood's lines or not, will continue. But *these* Proms—with all their energy and planning and careful marking of parts and Gargantuan programmes and Bach-Wood and Bach-Klenovsky and Fantasias on British Sea-Songs and button-holes and wild enthusiasm—these are Henry Wood's. No one can continue them, though someone may create something like them, possibly better, probably worse. And as this is Wood's farewell season—and as he is not a great singer but a great teacher of singing—the Proms *are* about to die. Let us consider the manner of their passing.

The Orchestra is to be a different one this year—the L.S.O.—and, as students of the correspondence columns of our daily press are delightedly aware, the Auspices are different. But nothing else will be changed in the ritual of recent years. Mondays will still be devoted to what Tovey called "bleeding chunks of butcher's meat chopped from Wagner's operas," Fridays to Beethoven. (The whole series of nine symphonies will be done, the first two on August 16th and the rest in chronological order on the seven succeeding Fridays.) Brahms and Bach have Wednesdays turn and turn about, Brahms getting the first innings on August 14th. Saturdays offer the customary Saturday mixture and include a sort of bonus performance of Beethoven's Fifth (August 17th) in addition to the one in the ordinary course of things on September 6th. Tuesdays are given over to special composers or groups: Scandinavian composers (August 13th), Haydn and Mozart (August 20th, September 3rd and 17th), Elgar (August 27th), Mendelssohn (September 10th) and Handel (September 24th). Three Thursdays (September 5th and 19th, and October 3rd) are devoted to Tchaikovsky and one (September 26th) to Schubert. The remaining Thursdays and one Tuesday (October 1st) are Saturday-like hotch-potches. Now to criticise all this is as easy as dive-bombing a lightship. Wagner is not twice as great a composer as Haydn and Mozart put together; Tchaikovsky is not three times as great as Schubert. But these are Wood's Proms and Wood's preferences; the choice and the balance are as personal as the selection of an anthology. And these vast dollops of single composer's works are defensible on the ground that these concerts serve a partly educational purpose and it is useful for a student to be able to hear several compositions by one master in immediate succession. But it is pardonable to ask, however uselessly, why anyone who has listened in one evening to two symphonies and two concertos by Haydn and Mozart *and* a new work by Hamilton Harty should want to stay to hear the late Sir Frederic Cowen's *The Butterfly's Ball*, or why anyone who has just heard two of Beethoven's greatest masterpieces and Mr. Lennox Berkeley's new Introduction and Allegro for two pianos and orchestra should be expected to endure Sullivan's deplorable *In Memoriam* Overture. Sir Henry seems always to have in mind the listener with a vast appetite and no taste—and when one remembers how often Prom audiences applaud good work and bad, fine performance and slipshod one, with equal enthusiasm, one is obliged to admit bitterly that, as a showman, his judgment is perfectly right.

But if Wood has shown great acuteness in giving his public what it wants, he has always shown still greater boldness in giving it what

it doesn't want, what apparently the musical public never wants: new and unfamiliar works. That has always been a cardinal point in his policy, just as it was of Dan Godfrey's at Bournemouth, and in this last season of all he has probably surpassed even himself. There may have been Prom seasons in the past that offered as large a crop of novelties—I have no leisure for the compilation of not particularly useful statistics—but there has certainly been none in recent years. We are promised first hearings of works by Vaughan Williams (Six Choral Songs for chorus and orchestra: September 10th), Hamilton Harty, Frank Bridge, Edmund Rubbra (Third Symphony: September 28th), and no fewer than ten other composers of more or less established reputation, three of them women: Dorothy Howell (whose now twenty-year-old *Lamia*, a remarkable work for a girl of twenty-one, is also to be revived on August 24th), Elisabeth Lutyens and Elizabeth Maconchy. One writes "established reputation" and then pauses to ask what sort of reputations these composers have established. It is a little disconcerting to find that in almost every case one thinks of them as "sound musicians" rather than as genuinely creative artists. Even Lennox Berkeley, whose Introduction and Allegro will be played on September 6th, has so far not quite justified his very considerable reputation. Howard Ferguson's *Three Diversions* (September 13th) is also worth making a special note of, for Ferguson is a composer to be watched. But on the whole it must be acknowledged that with the notable exception of the new Rubbra symphony, these more-than-a-dozen novelties include no likely masterpieces.

Lector: Isn't that a very unfair and prejudicial remark?

Scriptor: I'm afraid it is. But the unlikely is as liable to happen in art as in life, and I shall be delighted if it does in any of these cases.

Quite as novel to many people as the so-called novelties will be some of the other works promised: Grieg's *Bergliot* and Palmgren's Fourth Piano Concerto (both August 13th), Rimsky-Korsakov's Fantasia on Russian Themes for violin and orchestra (August 30th), Holbrooke's *Three Blind Mice* Variations (September 7th), Roger-Ducasse's *Joli jeu de Furet* (September 16th), Mozart's Adagio and Rondo (K. 617) for violin, 'cello, flute, oboe and piano, and Double Concerto in E flat (K. 365) (both September 17th), Bantock's Pagan Symphony (October 1st), Benjamin Dale's *Before the Paling of the Stars* and Balfour Gardiner's *News from Whydah* (both for chorus and orchestra, and both on October 4th) and Cyril Scott's *Ode to Great Men* for orator and orchestra (October 5th). And although I loathe Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*, I do not grudge the Scriabin-lovers—if any of the tribe survive—the thrills they are due to experience on September 14th.

GERALD ABRAHAM

COUNTRY NOTES

Bulbs for the Autumn

WE are not to be allowed to buy bulbs this year, even if we have the money to do so. A wise order of the Board of Trade will forbid such purchases, at any rate until such time as the demands of the American market have been satisfied. English bulbs will go to the U.S.A. as gracious and lucrative envoys of a country which would rather say it with flowers than with bombs. The English bulb-growing industry should benefit in the long run, though one is sorry to realise that it must be at the expense of the Dutch bulb-growers, surely as inoffensive a race of experts as ever graced Europe in the pursuance of their affair.

Meanwhile what are we to do about our deprivation? Few of us would wish to forego the solace of some brightness in our rooms during the dark days of winter. They have long been precious to our hearts, those bowls of fibre or pots of soil which we keep in dark cupboards or plunge in ashes, bringing them out gradually to the light as the blanched noses of hyacinth, narcissus, crocus or tulip push up, demanding more light to turn them green and eventually to bring them into the colours which we receive gratefully as our reward. Are we to be defrauded of this small pleasure in this year of care?

A little ingenuity will, and quite legally, circumvent the order of the Board of Trade.

This is the month when we can lift some bulbs from our own garden or beg some from the garden of a friend, and pot them up in the usual way. A spade thrust into an old bed of spring-flowering bulbs should bring up enough for our needs, even if we do slice a few in half in the process. It is true that they will not bloom quite so early as the bulb specially prepared for forcing and will possibly not produce quite such fine blooms, but even if we do have to wait until January instead of filling our rooms by Christmas the experiment is worth a trial.

There are other methods by which we may increase our supply, not for indoor use this time but for eventual use in the garden. The first and most obvious method is to dig up some established bulbs and detach the innumerable bulblets which will be found clustered round the parent. These can be planted in any spare piece of ground—straight drills, conspicuously labelled at each end, are convenient since the nursery is then less likely to be disturbed by digging and weeding—and in the course of two or three years will reward our labour by developing into full-size bulbs. Tulips lend themselves richly to reproduction in this way; and as for narcissus, it is agreeable to find the number of offspring which a single parent will supply after one season. There is an avarice in human nature which enjoys getting something for nothing.

I was surprised to find that a fine amateur gardener of my acquaintance was unaware of a simple method of increasing her own lilies, so perhaps it may be worth suggesting to other people. Instead of buying a very few lily-bulbs at several shillings a dozen, as we did in the old days when they were still available, it is easy to produce hundreds, even thousands, for nothing but the cost of our own labour and three years' worth of patience. There are several ways of doing this. Either you may take up an old bulb and, pulling it to pieces, set each separate scale in a box filled with sandy compost*; or you may allow the seed-pod to ripen and then sow the seeds in sandy drills out of doors. That superb and most satisfactory lily, Regale, will give you not thousands but hundreds of thousands of seed capsules on a single head. Paper-thin, they are packed with a neatness no professional packer could rival; the maximum of delicacy and prodigality in the minimum of space. The slitting open of this miracle of compression is not the least part of the pleasure to be obtained.

Then there are the black buttons asking to be stripped from the stems of certain lilies, notably the tough old Tiger-lily of cottage gardens. Each one of these will grow as freely as mustard-and-cress, and indeed may be observed waving a pale little worm-like root in the air in an urgent desire for a separate life, long before it has been harvested by the gardener or has fallen to the ground of its own accord. Save these and sow them.

Save also, economically, the seeds of some annuals. Get an old tobacco tin and pour a muddle into it: Iceland poppy, love-in-a-mist, eschscholtzia, violas, whatever offers you its generosity. These can be scattered broadcast next month or in the spring of next year. There is no need to spend money when the free supply is available.

V. SACKVILLE WEST

WORDS FOR A DANCE

WHITHER, O stars—
Lovers, night-strollers,
Street marchers with slogans
Tear-gas to laughter—
Whither, O stars,
And astray seeking fusion,
Those who carve on trees unidentified initials?
Those who consult your oracles in Sunday papers?

Whither, O sea—
Lost in the night of ships,
Cast into Labrador ice,
Unmentioned in Arctic dispatches,
Torpedoed on Barbary coasts—
Whither, O sea,
With the salt songs the bitter shanties
Deck hands slaves of merchant princes?
Whither and outward are bound your only conquerors?

Whither, my world—
White caps softly tilting
Opposites to opposite,
Sliding from axis and
In contraries turning—
Whither, my world,
My planet, my penny,
Spinning the lonely through lonelier heaven,
Inscribing an orbit enlarged and diminishing?

EWAN MILNE

* The Japanese, I believe, used to eat the scales of *Lilium Auratum*, growing on the slopes of Fujiyama, as we eat the leaves of globe artichokes, until they discovered that *L. Auratum* had quite a different value in the European market.

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Cottage to Let," at Wyndhams Theatre

With Mr. Alastair Sim as suave and oily Espionage and Mr. Leslie Banks as simple-hearted Science, no spy thriller could fail to be entertaining. As it is, *Cottage To Let* is a good specimen of its kind, with few of the clichés from which the genre usually suffers. Negatively, we are spared guttural voices snarling sinister threats, Bulldog Drummond right hooks, and, greatest relief of all, romantic interludes with the clear-skinned, grave-eyed girls who seem to infest most quarters of the political underworld. Positively, there is a large number of good jokes (including the one about the stupidity of the English, that has brought down the house ever since Shakespeare), an unusually ingenious plot, and an admirable construction that ensures an almost unbroken alternation of Messrs. Leslie Banks and Alastair Sim. It would be unfair to disclose the detail of the play, but one may reveal that it affords opportunity for Mr. Charles Mortimer to give a superb little study of a bullying Chief Constable, for Miss Gillian Lind to be delightfully feather-headed, and for Master George Cole to prove that a child actor need not excite infanticidal instincts. But it is the rude timidity of Mr. Banks and the giggling malice of Mr. Sim that make *Cottage To Let* the best thriller in London. How good a play can be in which character actors take all the chief parts!

Georges Rouault, at the Redfern Gallery

The aquatints by Rouault now on view at the Redfern Gallery stand in a curious relationship to a world at war, bringing as they do a purely spiritual message and communication. The Paris Exhibition of 1937 made it abundantly clear that here was one of the very greatest of living painters and perhaps, so far as a blazing spiritual essence was concerned, the greatest. The powerful link of temperament which relates him to Daumier has never appeared more closely than in the present display; familiar though one is with every aspect of his ferocious mysticism, with his mood of spiritual and moral violence that offers no concessions to the faint-hearted, one had not realised to the full the range of his extravagant sense of humour, of sheer Molièresque farce.

The large proofs, the only ones extant, the plates having been destroyed, reflect a variety of phases, ranging from the mysterious and faintly archaic portrait of Vollard with its charged, concentrated tension, to the analytical and straightforward portrait of Verlaine and the head of St. John the Baptist, which carries one back to the artist's early days with Gustave Moreau, not to mention the grotesque *Prophet* with his grinning rictus and the splendid satiric comedy of *Two Figures*.

In the coloured aquatints the tones are those of a clearer and less complex world than ours, of a universe without moral equivocation. His glowing Byzantinism loses nothing of its effect through the limitation of a small scale; and with only the barest hint of an unspecified orientalism—the bulb of a dome massively blocked in with colour—a burning Biblical scene springs to life. *Christ Crowned* has an indescribable terror and majesty, and in *The Crucifixion* serenity and savagery fuse together. Only at times does his breadth of style lead to a certain ambiguity, when in such fine designs as *The Judge* and *The Dictator* an androgynous element intervenes, a little obscuring the intention. But where so much is superlatively good it is impossible to single out more than a handful: *The Passion*, *Self-Portrait*, and *Automne*, with its tempered lyricism.

In the adjacent English and French exhibition there are a number of canvases which enchant. A Sickert dominates the room, *Celebrations, Dieppe*, with its tags of bunting fluttering at the end of a long, lilac-shadowed alley; and *Furniture Shop, Dieppe*, is a lovely composition in red, maroon, orange and chocolate. There is an iridescent Bonnard of the Boulevard de Clichy, an unusually good flower-piece by Redon. The drawing of a peasant-woman by Van Gogh has a Michelangelesque splendour, and there is a tiny Courbet landscape which has been painted as effortlessly as a soap-bubble is launched from its bowl. By contrast the breadth of a Soutine *paysage* near it appears meretricious. In the early lithographs of Vuillard and Bonnard there is a magical escape from our present reality.

"My Two Husbands," at the Regal
"Ghost Breakers," at the Plaza

Neither of these films can be recommended as more than the easiest of care-killers. *My Two Husbands* comes from a Somerset Maugham play. A husband, certified drowned, returns to find his widow comfortably re-married. The point ingeniously laboured is that the lady is shocked, thrilled, delighted to have two husbands at once; her plaint is the reverse of "How happy could I be with either" and every step made towards a final choice is unbearable. Jean Arthur, tempting though she is to the eye, doesn't quite grasp the part. She ought to be airily, irresistibly above compromise, whereas a mixture of pertness and *tendresse* make it certain that *both* husbands would walk out of the house arm-in-arm—a conclusion not reached by the story. Certainty of style is what the film misses. There remains, though, in this comedy of double-dealing the high spirits of the competing husbands (Mervyn Douglas and Fred Macmurray), and great play is made with the beds in the guest room, a codfish of a butler, and inquiring cops. Perhaps, within stage tradition, it will just do.

The first half of *Ghost Breakers* (with a few ominous creakings of well-worn thrills to come) flings and kicks surprisingly. A murder in a hotel corridor, the escape in a trunk of a suspected radio-talker (Bob Hope), and his black manservant hopefully tapping the luggage on a crowded quayside excite all our irresponsibility. The ghost-breaking in Cuba, to which this is only preliminary, turns out to be the feeblest clanking of properties: a visit to the Soane Museum would provide more creeps any day. The flights of bats and the moving suit of armour, rolling negro eyes, sleep-walking servitors, Paulette Goddard's appearances in negligé and bathing dress—all seem to have been put there with box-office precision. But until the machinery gets going, there is half-an-hour's release of snap comedy. Bob Hope, as the brimming radio-talker, is a new product of American nerves and wisecracking.

THE COMING WEEK

SATURDAY, August 10th—
- Second Week of Fabian Summer School. Speakers include: K. Zilliacus, H. N. Brailsford, Ernest Davies; Dartington Hall.
- Roel Summer School of Puppetry, Guiting Power, Glos. Till August 24th. Particulars from 6 Maze Road, Kew.
- Opening of Proms, Queen's Hall, 8.
- Soviet Films, Trinity Church Hall, Finchley Road, 8. Admission 6*d*. and 1*s*.

WEDNESDAY, August 14th—
- Prof. Hugh Sellon: "France and Great Britain, Yesterday and To-morrow," French Institute, 5.
- Circle of International Art Concert, St. George's Church, Bloomsbury, 8. Admission free.

THURSDAY, August 15th—
- Ivor Montagu: "Entertainment and the War Effort," Helvetia Club, Gerrard Place, W.C.2, 8.

SATURDAY, August 17th—
- British Drama League Summer School at Stratford-on-Avon. Till August 24th. Particulars from 9 Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Correspondence

A STRANGE CONTRAST

SIR,—Your revelations about the treatment of the refugees, following on the *Arandora Star* story, must have made many of your readers angry. I hope this anger will illuminate, and not obscure, the full political implications of the matter. Is it not clear that the treatment to which the anti-Fascist refugees have been subjected is no mere product of bureaucratic thoughtlessness and incompetence in an emergency, but has deeper political roots: that the failure of the authorities to differentiate between Fascists and anti-Fascists is because too many of the "higher-ups" are half-Fascists themselves, who either cannot see the difference between Nazi and anti-Nazi or else regard these refugees, few of whom have connections with the best families and many smack of left-wing opinions, as socially the more dangerous? How else explain the contrast between Huyton Camp and the comparative comfort of the Mosleys and Ramsays at Brixton, with their bottles of wine and expensive food sent in from outside? In France one had the same contrast between the treatment of the Cagoulards, on the one hand, and of the Spanish republicans and other refugees, herded in concentration camps to await the Gestapo. Here the English-French parallel seems to be complete.

One might refer, again, to the widespread discrimination against people of known left-wing opinions, in the L.D.V.—sufficiently widespread to suggest that those in control think more of its possible use against a popular movement at home than against Fascism from abroad—as evidence that so far from the "democratic revolution" lying *behind* us (as you, Sir, and others have said), this still remains as a task *ahead*; and that in the minds and actions of our ruling class the war is only too far from being a "people's war." M.D.

REFUGEES

SIR,—We wish to give our whole-hearted support to the efforts which are being made by every man of common sense and goodwill to right the wrong done to the thousands of anti-Nazi refugees who have been interned. These men and women sought asylum in this country because they felt it could offer them that freedom of thought and speech without which they, as we also, believed civilised life to be impossible.

Every refugee who received a "C" certificate at his Tribunal in this country must already have proved beyond doubt that he is an anti-Nazi. It is these men and women who have fought in the vanguard of this battle to which we too are now pledged. Many, without counting the cost, have sacrificed everything but their freedom of mind and spirit. These are our friends, and we have interned them.

Among them are many artists, cultured men to whom internment and deportation must be especially hard. Had they not held freedom dear they would not have renounced so much for it. It is for these particularly that we, as artists, wish to plead.

We plead for the immediate release of all artists who received "C" certificates at their Tribunals. Every evidence and proof of their good faith has already been laid before their judges, and since no further evidence can possibly be forthcoming, it would appear to be a waste of time to go once more through a process already satisfactorily conducted.

To those who were deported before public indignation could reverse the ill-considered policy then adopted by the Government, every amend should be made. Families should be reunited, and to those who came alone to this country, every facility should be given for keeping in close communication with their friends. We also owe it to them to see that they live in civilised conditions in the countries to which we have deported them.

We are much heartened by the magnificent way in which the press has voiced the public indignation, and we sincerely hope that the promises given by Sir John Anderson on the 23rd July will be carried out without further hindrance.

Artists' Refugee Committee,
33 Porchester Sq., W.2.

AUGUSTUS JOHN
JAN GORDON
VANESSA BELL
DUNCAN GRANT
JAMES BATEMAN
MUIRHEAD BONE

SIR,—Thank you for taking up this question so forcibly. A worthy young Jew (classed "C"), an expert in metal-work, who has twice lost his means of living through Hitler, and tried in vain to get war work making tools, was interned.

The second letter his mother had from him (dated ten days before received) said he was to be sent overseas next day. All the letters written to him since he left home were returned unopened, and it may be months before his mother knows where he is, and until he can hear from her.

What sort of idea of British fair play and common sense will he and those like him take to our Colonies? What a waste of money and man-power! A number of well-known people, both English and Jewish, would gladly have vouched for his integrity and talent. F. E. R.

[Large numbers of such letters continue to reach us.—ED. *N.S.&N.*]

THE TAX ON BOOKS

SIR,—The Chancellor of the Exchequer threatens to include books within the scope of the proposed Purchase Tax (on luxuries).

Now the estimated trade figures of the home and export sales of books for the years 1937–1939 to the nearest £100 are as follows:

Total £10,811,700: of which home is £6,964,400, export £3,847,300.

From this it will be seen that the export trade in books is worth about 55.2 per cent. of the home trade.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget Speech stated that British exports must be encouraged, if necessary at the expense of home trade. A White Paper on the aims of the Export Council states that the export trade necessary to win the war can only be achieved by "some diversion from the home market." From this and in view of the large part export plays in the British publishing industry it seems evident that the Chancellor believes that it is possible to divert books from the home market in order to stimulate export figures. He is in fact making no distinction between books and, for instance, boots, and does not realise that there are a great many more sizes and makes of books than there are of boots.

It is urgent that he should be told how completely incidental the export trade in books is to the home trade. His proposal to impose a Purchase Tax on books will mean the complete ruination of 75 per cent. of the publishing houses in the United Kingdom, and a loss of £3,000,000 to £4,000,000 in dollar exchange represented by the export trade to the United States of America, and Canada. His plan, in fact, will effect the exact opposite to what he expected.

The Chancellor has told a Deputation led by the Archbishop of Canterbury last week, and replied to a question from Mr. Kenneth Lindsay, M.P., in the House of Commons on Tuesday, that he cannot make exceptions. He proposes to put books in the category of luxuries, and thereby, if the tax is the suggested 10 per cent., to assist the Inland Revenue to the tune of a mere £700,000 per annum, as compensation for the loss of approximately £4,000,000 in dollar exchange which the export trade would, in normal times, provide from Canada and the United States of America.

JOHN USBORNE

THE DANGER IN IRELAND

SIR,—While your correspondent is right in drawing attention to the condition of "stabilised tension" which obtains on the Border between Eire and the Six Counties (improperly called Ulster)—and indeed throughout Northern Ireland—there are certain misapprehensions in his letter which should be clarified.

The Ulster Defence Force cannot strictly be called an irregular army, nor is it true that the Imperial Parliament is alone responsible for the defence of Northern Ireland: the whole question of allocation of responsibility between Westminster and Stormont is complicated and anomalous. "Defence" is a reserved power under the 1920 Act, and is therefore a Westminster province; "home security," however, is a transferred power controlled direct by Stormont. It was at first a moot point whether the Local Defence Force came under he one or the other: the decision was apparently left to Lord Craigavon who plumped for Stormont control, and announced that the Ulster Defence Force had been completely recruited in a week. This, of course, was achieved by making the Defence Force an auxiliary body of the notorious B specials, themselves a subsidiary body of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

This procedure aroused considerable criticism from all sections of opinion inside Northern Ireland. Complaints that the line of demarcation between the powers of the R.U.C. Inspector-General and the G.O.C. of the British military garrison was not clear, and that there was great friction between the police and the military over the allocation of ammunition and equipment, were made in the Stormont House of Commons.

The sectarian attitude and function of the B special force is well known. That it is being applied to the Ulster Defence Force was proved last week when the application for enrolment of an ex-Service man, a certified machine-gun instructor, was refused on the grounds that "we want no Papishes."

The numbers of the B specials had *already* been doubled—which brought them up to some 25,000—some months ago, before the question of an L.D.V. arose. They are now to be doubled again; Lord Craigavon has announced 50,000 as his aim for the immediate future. In April this year it was stated at Westminster that the cost of the B specials since 1921 has been £6½ million—roughly £350,000 a year. There have been this year two supplementary estimates for them: in March £32,600, and in July £50,000. The mysteries of Northern Ireland finance are a ticklish question, and I will not embark on a dispute as to the hidden subsidy from Westminster; suffice it to remind the English taxpayer that the Northern Ireland contribution to the Imperial Parliament, originally estimated at £7 million annually, has reached barely that amount in the whole twenty years, and has been declining steadily and rapidly since 1927.

I heartily endorse your correspondent's views on the danger of encouraging extreme sectarianism at such a time and in such a place.

11 Dartmouth Street, S.W.1. JOHN HAWKINS

CHINA AND JAPAN

SIR,—Mr. Timperley rightly protested against the idea of General Chiang Kai-shek possibly coming to terms with the Japanese; in the three years that have passed, the Generalissimo has given us abundant cause for faith in his steadfastness.

But the idea originated in minds much more important than mine. The British Government's expression of hope, that during the three months that we are assisting Japan to blockade China, some approach towards peace may be found is equivalent to saying, "If you don't surrender to Japan you can't expect us to open the Burma road again." I hope, with Mr. Timperley, that Whitehall's speculations bear no relation to reality.

The British official attitude is always that Chinese resistance is very troublesome, and even now the Foreign Office likes Japan better than China, owing, apparently, to the fact that the Japanese give such an excellent imitation of the Whitehall manner. But now that Mr. Matsuoka, who conspicuously lacks the Whitehall manner, is at the Japanese Foreign Office, there may come a change.

Japan's reply to our closing of the Burma road was to extend her aegis from East Asia to Greater East Asia and the South Seas. Perhaps now Whitehall will understand a little better than before that China is fighting for us and that to betray her means loss to ourselves as well as to her.

A. MORGAN YOUNG

PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

SIR,—Public Opinion Polls have been much in the limelight recently. As the sole organisation responsible for making Gallup Surveys in this country, we may, perhaps, be permitted our observations upon some of the points raised in the House of Commons and the press.

Doubts have been expressed as to the reliability of sampling methods as a means of obtaining an accurate picture of public opinion on current issues. As regards the answer given by Sir Derrick Gunston to such doubts, in last week's debate, we would emphasise his explanation that the *Literary Digest* forecast of the 1936 Presidential Election went wrong (as Dr. Gallup had predicted it would) precisely because the *Digest* did not adopt the controlled sampling method, but preferred to base its forecast upon a colossal but unselective poll.

To the charge that this method of ascertaining public opinion is an unwarranted intrusion into private lives, it is in our opinion sufficient answer that very few indeed resent being asked. Moreover, so far as our interviewing is concerned, no pressure is put upon members of the public contacted to reply; questions are put openly and nobody is asked to disclose his name or address.

As to the purpose served by such polls, one need go no further than Mr. Duff-Cooper's confession in the House last week that the Ministry of Information survey, with which, of course, we are in no way connected, had indicated that the Silent Column was a mistake. At all times, if public opinion is to receive full expression, scientific surveys fulfil an essential function. Even more is this the case to-day when other methods of expression, such as elections, are not available. A. G. LEWIS

The British Institute of Public Opinion,
Aldwych House,
London, W.C.2.

SIR,—The Ministry of Information has, in the course of its short career, brought forth so many abortions that, purely as a matter of chance one might expect something of value also to appear eventually. I wish to suggest that this may have occurred in the recent proposal to sample public opinion on various matters. From the seething miasma of the advertising world many new social practices, not always bad, have emerged. Thus, by Gallup out of Market Research and Straw Polls grew the scientific sampling of public opinion: first, in order to assist the prediction of election results and later to record accurately shifts and biases in public sentiment for the first time in the history of large communities. This makes possible some realisation of government "by the people," an ideal so far unrealised. Necessarily. Such a technique heralds the encroachment of Science upon Sociology and forecasts the eventual supersession of Democracy by what might be named Sciocracy, or government by knowledge. The contemporary practice of allowing citizens to express one opinion once every three years or so, on issues ill-defined and in circumstances prejudicial, is plainly obsolete.

It is debatable whether such a technique should be used by the Government or by a civil body. Plainly a corrupt Government could, and would, use such a device to further its own ends and the temptation to suppress undesirable findings would be nearly overwhelming. The publication of *all* findings of such surveys, with full details as to the methods of questioning employed, is essential if they are to have value. An extra-governmental body is likely to have difficulty in having its results published widely or adequately, or to carry authority. The publication of the findings of the British Institute of Public Opinion, for example, is the monopoly of the *News Chronicle*, which is good for the latter but bad for the former. Again, such an enterprise will be certain to meet with a hostile reception from our lazy and pontificating leader writers and columnists who will find it less easy to assert what "the nation" does, or does not, feel on this and that issue.

The Ministry of Information's excursion into scientific sociology has, therefore, the seeds of something very important for future methods of government. As an unique democratic experiment it should meet with acute, but not destructive, criticism from the socially and politically interested, and the scientific-minded. The experience of the organisers of the Gallup, *Fortune*, B.I.P.O., polls and Mass-Observation should be drawn upon. If the job is bungled, as it has every possibility of being, one more little tentacle of social progress will have been cut off short. JOHN D. SPOONER

White Walls,
High and Over, Amersham.

MICROFILM AND NEWSPAPERS

SIR,—Mr. Ritchie Calder's entertaining and stimulating article on the possibilities of wartime salvage of paper, particularly newsprint, by the use of microfilm, revives a topic that has been of active interest to this Association for several years. In 1937 the Council of the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux set up a special Committee for the purpose of investigating the possibility of inaugurating a subsidiary body, to be known as the Newspaper Records Society. In the same year an exhibition illustrating the progress and practical uses of micro-photography was

organised in connection with the 14th Annual Conference of the Association, held at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, when two resolutions were passed authorising the Council to appeal for funds to further the scheme. The Committee put forward a plan for the micro-filming of those issues of the older newspapers, printed before 1800, which time or accident were rapidly destroying or which were inaccessible to research. This received the support of such eminent authorities as Mr. Arundell Esdaile, Sir Richard Gregory, Lord Lloyd, Mr. H. G. Wells, and many others. Its ultimate failure to materialise was due solely to lack of financial support, but while temporarily suspended it has never been buried. Applied micro-photography has continued in the forefront of the Association's interests, as is shown by the paper prepared by Dr. Leonard Sayce for the 16th Conference, 1939 (unhappily cancelled owing to the outbreak of war), and by the meeting of members for the discussion of this paper held as recently as April, 1940, at the Science Museum.

The scheme prepared by the Association in 1937 was primarily intended as an aid to research, but it could be easily applied to wartime emergencies. Whereas the original plan started with the photographing of those older issues of the newspapers that were inaccessible or disintegrating from old age, and envisaged the filling-in of gaps in the British Museum files, we understand that Mr. Calder is pleading for the microfilming of the whole of the British Museum hoard and the subsequent pulping of the greater part of the 25,000 tons of newspapers now stored there. The same organisation could deal with either aspect of the problem and could, further, extend these operations to the very considerable hoards of old newspaper files now stored in libraries and other institutions, including newspaper offices, throughout the country.

As a method of duplicating records, micro-photography is probably used to a greater extent by banks and other business houses in this country than is generally realised by the public, but its practical applications have not yet received the encouragement that has enabled the United States to build up its widespread and efficient services. Plans for the development of microphotography here, with all their potential wartime value, are in existence—who will be the far-seeing and national benefactor that will set the wheels working? My Association would willingly continue to enlarge its activities in connection with British micro-photography if assured of adequate support.

ARTHUR F. RIDLEY,
Chairman of Council,
Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux.

Our Net Sales

During the six months January to June, 1940, the Fully-paid Net Sales of this paper averaged

30,410

copies per week

IN ADDITION THERE WERE 2,404 SUBSCRIPTIONS AT REDUCED RATES (WEEKLY AVERAGE OVER THE HALF YEAR) WHICH BRINGS THE TOTAL AVERAGE WEEKLY NET SALE FIGURE TO

32,814

copies per week

NEW STATESMAN & NATION
10 Great Turnstile, London, W.C.1

UNIMPRESSED

SIR,—I enclose a copy of a letter I have sent to the *Times*. As it will probably not be printed, I think you may like to see it and know what some of your readers think of your unpleasant rag. Needless to say I do not take it myself.

DEAR SIR,

May I suggest that it is time that THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION should be made to change its tone. I always find it a most depressing paper, but this week (July 27th) it is worse than usual. It opens with an attack on Sir Kingsley Wood and his budget, who entirely shirks "the real problem of a war economy" etc. The Prime Minister is abused in the next page, he will force Japan to collaborate more closely with the Axis. The next to suffer is Sir John Anderson over his internment of anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist enemy aliens. As regards this I should like to say that a man may be very strongly against the régime in his country, so much so that he may prefer temporarily to leave it and take refuge in another country; but that does not necessarily mean that he is a traitor to his country and would like to see it defeated. The Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION is very strongly anti-Government and it would appear that he is anti-everything that is being done to win the war and yet I would not go so far as to suggest that he is really a Fifth Columnist.

Lord Halifax comes in for his share of abuse for his recent speech, two columns are devoted to this and the writer gives the speech which he ought to have made in reply to Hitler.

Finally, two and a half columns (from a correspondent) dwell upon the folly of thinking that we can win the war by starving Germany out.

I seldom read such a succession of depressing and defeatist articles. L. S. BRAY

The Manor House,
Shere, Guildford.

IMPRESSED

SIR,—Your leading article on "Hitler and Halifax" was one of the most encouraging things that we have read for months. All the undersigned were undergraduates at Oxford when Lord Halifax delivered his address as Chancellor of the University, in which he said that the present struggle was between youth and youth, and not between youth and age. In that case, the youth of this country *must* have something to offer to Europe; and even if Lord Halifax has not the revolutionary spirit to proclaim what it is, surely there must be others in the present government who *can* see the need and *will* tell the world. If there is, as you say, still time we sincerely hope that your article will be followed up by all those inside as well as outside the government who do not desire a return to the old Europe.

J. I. WEST, C. O. L. COBURN, F. E. NORRIS, H. T. FOX, A. D. BASS, H. TENNYSON, F. R. DU BOULAY, E. A. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS, M. ELIS-WILLIAMS, RODERIC FENWICK OWEN, OLIVER WRIGHTSON, T. D. GREEN, K. F. URWIN, G. P. GRANT, D. L. MUNDY.

Hawkspur Camp,
Great Bardfield, Essex.

SIR,—May I thank you for your issue of July 20th? Your high standard of literary excellence is more than ever apparent in the features and articles as a whole: but what most appealed to a young serving officer was the courage of your attack on the treatment of friendly aliens.

The fact that my NEW STATESMAN AND NATION arrived late lightens the gloom of Leonard Woolf's article: the voice of the intellect is not always in practical affairs a voice crying in a British wilderness; for recent proceedings in the House show that some at least of the evil things done in panic in the last few weeks are going to find redress.

Friends of mine, who hate the Nazi doctrine perhaps more strongly than we ourselves, because they or (worse) their families have felt its bestial lash in Germany, have been among those interned; and when they shortly reappear, as now no doubt many of them will, I shall show them this copy of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION, in order to prove to those of them whose faith in English justice may be dimmed, how strongly their cause was upheld by a journal which, knowing this England better than most, can surely claim to speak in her behalf.

Royal Aero Club, GEORGE LAWS

ROBERT DELL

SIR,—It is only in the last few days that I saw your appreciative notes of Robert Dell, recently dead in New York.

This cosmopolitan elegant, intellectual, and wit, will be remembered by many people in many cities (Paris, London, Berlin and Geneva among them) for his talk, for his stimulating partisanship, for his everlasting interest in humanity and in new ideas—apart from his having contributed appreciably to some of the very best political journalism of his time.

I would very much like to add a more personal reminiscence: it is of his quite exceptional personal kindliness, especially to the young. He could listen as well as talk, and had the unconscious gift of treating the young as his intellectual equals.

It was possible for a fellow-journalist thirty years his junior to have a long and warm personal friendship with Dell, and now to remember him with affection and gratitude. HUBERT GRIFFITH

R.A.F. Camp.

BOOKSIE BICKERINGS

SIR,—What is an "Enconium"? Miss Sitwell (in your correspondence columns) alleges that a brother of hers was recently reproved for administering an "enc." to the other brother; and she herself seems displeased because Mr. T. C. Worsley "bestowed" one on Mr. Auden.

The derivation of the word would suggest that it is a dose of hemlock (Greek, *Κωνίον*). Dare I presume I am right? The spitefulness of your correspondent would lead one to think so.

22 Queen's Gate Terrace, G. N.
S.W.7.

[We printed Miss Sitwell's letter exactly as it was sent to us. Perhaps she meant encomium.—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

SIR,—In the present age the would-be poet's attitude toward his material may be likened to that of a mature man of middle age toward a box of old letters discovered in an attic: he is without emotion but he is all understanding. Nevertheless, a certain type of obstinate aspirant, deficient in qualities of self-criticism, continues undaunted along the path of arid, semi-creative, cerebral word-weaving. The thinner the spoof, provided only it has the air of learned abstruseness about it, the more readily your life-through-spectacles high-brow will fall for it. A balloon thus grows to monster size fed with the gases of miscreative flatulence until at last it is ready to rise and become a star in the firmament. In the nick of time comes Miss Sitwell, or another, and with the point of her pen punctures the whole caboodle. For such feats there should be struck another King's Medal awarded annually for the best effort in debunking a modern poet. The patron saint of the modern poetic gelding is, of course, T. S. Eliot, whose *Waste Land* is no more poetry than the I.O.U. of a bankrupt man is money.

The Pond House, GEORGE RICHARDS
Stoke Row,
Nr. Henley-on-Thames.

THE NATIONAL UNION STUDENTS' CLUBROOM

SIR,—May I, through your columns, extend to all University students now serving in H.M. Forces a cordial invitation from the National Union of Students to use its Clubroom premises at 3 Endsleigh Street?

The Clubroom is open until 6 p.m. each day, and the N.U.S. hopes that former students will use it as a comfortable and quiet place in which to meet their friends, read, or write letters. Tea is served in the afternoons.

The N.U.S. looks forward to meeting many old friends passing through London, and would also welcome any students from the Dominions who are at present in this country. BRIAN SIMON,
President

The National Union of Students,
3 Endsleigh Street,
London, W.C.1.

A MESSAGE TO *Leaders of Business and Finance*

THE OWNERSHIP OR CONTROL of money is at all times a grave responsibility. In this war it is a responsibility of deeper significance. It is the imperative duty of us all to place our available money at the disposal of the State in the form in which the Government needs it and at the time when it is required. To withhold it is to weaken the Country's financial fabric and thus to prolong the war. If you have money in your possession or within your control, release it. Lend it now by subscribing to National War Bonds. This is the form in which the country needs the help of its Leaders of Business and Finance — and needs it today.

2½% National War Bonds

(1945-47)

A full Trustee Security — Price of issue £100 per cent — Subscriptions of £100 or multiples of £100 will be received until further notice—Interest accrues from date of purchase—Prospectus and application forms obtainable from Banks or Stockbrokers.

Issued by The National Savings Committee, London

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

In 1909 the Young Turks ejected the last real Sultan of the Turkish Empire from his retreat at Yildiz, near Constantinople. Fear of attack from the sea had, many years before, made Abdul Hamid abandon the white marble palace of Dolmabagdshe for the labyrinth in the hills, a place of secret passages, defensible corners, corridors built so that two people could not walk abreast and which could easily be barricaded by the innumerable pianos kept for the purpose, and where even the lavatory windows were observation posts. Here, surrounded by loaded revolvers, alarm bells, triple locks and antidotes for poison and with scores of trunks and suitcases waiting to be packed at a moment's notice by the eunuchs, the man who had ruled Turkey for thirty-two years gave himself up without resistance. He had thought he might lose his life; what he had not imagined was that he would be deposed. Dressed in a faded and mossy frock coat, sly, musty, speechless with fear, the Shadow of God and private hoarder of railway shares, was brought like a rabbit out of his warren to be bundled into exile at Salonika, amid the hysterics of the 300 women of his harem. His fight against the West was over. Symbolically at least, Turkish medievalism was at an end; Western capitalism had first undermined and now set seriously about destroying its nearest Oriental victim. Had he lived beyond 1918 Abdul Hamid would have seen the *coup de grâce* delivered. And no subsequent reaction was to justify him. For though during nine years of exile he gloated over the errors of the Young Turks, he would have seen a new Turkey which, in adopting Western nationalism, had thrust him and his policies even farther into the past, and had left him, one of the monstrous, pathetic curiosities of the nineteenth century.

To English readers familiar with the fulminations of Mr. Gladstone, the name of Abdul Hamid awakens mixed emotions of horror and embarrassment. He recalls the Armenian massacres of the 'nineties. He also recalls a characteristic ambiguity of our political conscience. He accompanied his uncle on the uncomfortable visit to England when (I quote his latest biographer)* " the British Government did not hesitate to warn the Sultan . . . that three manifestations of his domestic life would be unacceptable—slaves, eunuchs and harem women. Only in the City did the Turks receive a warm welcome." He was, in fact, being used as a devil and as decoy to investors. (Later, when three Europeans offered themselves as eunuchs at the Court, Abdul Hamid very naturally supposed the West was repenting and was accepting the leadership of the East!) Now, thanks to the researches of a gifted German biographer, Miss Alma Wittlin, a fuller knowledge of Abdul Hamid's life and his significance in Europe is available. Her book, ably translated by Norman Denny, undoubtedly increases our horror, for Abdul Hamid was " the sick man of Europe "

Brought up in the ignorance and the torpor, the malice and the hot-house atmosphere of the harem, Abdul Hamid was one of those inadequate and ambitious rulers who inherit an Empire when it is decaying from within and when it is attacked from without by forces they have not been trained to understand. Without education or understanding they fall back upon natural cunning. So Philip II of Spain inherited his kingdom, a mediocrity overpowered by the estate of a great emperor; and it is curious to observe in both Philip and Abdul Hamid the same reliance on a dilatory fox-like cunning, on the petty repertory of cruelty and fear, and the irrational appeal to religion. Paralyse the people with espionage, keep the factions alive so that by dividing you can rule, intoxicate the public mind with traditional fantasies—such is the formula of the inadequate heirs to tottering empires, who see their task not as revolutionary but as one of patching up, of putting off the evil day. So tenacity may disguise mediocrity and little political victories may catch the eye as the current rushes them helplessly to the edge. They will be devious enough for their destiny if they cannot be great enough for it.

Perhaps some pan-Islamic writer of the future will think Abdul Hamid a tragic figure, just as Catholic apologists have sainted Philip. If one is looking for tragedy in the Turkish collapse one must turn rather to Abdul Hamid's predecessors, his bluff uncle, the Sultan Aziz, the bolder rider and cattle breeder; or to Abdul Hamid's brother, the sensitive Murad who, having eagerly drunk revolutionary doctrine from his tutor, went out of his mind when the power to act was put in his hands. The prison life of Court and harem was a protection from the world, and the attempt to face the main facts of Turkish life—the penetration of the West and the financial ruin which Western capitalism was bringing—brought the inevitable nervous breakdown. Before Murad had become a lunatic, the vital and puritanical Aziz had been changed by office into a gluttonous lecher who sat down to a breakfast of 60 hard-boiled eggs and two lambs on his visit to Paris, kept a harem of 900 women (about 400 more than the average) and whose favourite pastime was chasing chickens up and down the palace and laughing himself sick when they got entangled in the curtains. His antics were not merely idle. They were sinister and perhaps conscious self-criticisms: " Unable to infuse new life into his country," writes Miss Wittlin, " he was drugging the life that ran so strongly in his own veins. . . . As though the life of a grown man were now too exacting for him, he made himself into a child. . . . Another favourite distraction—perhaps a deliberate mockery of himself, of his surrounding world, of Europe, or of all three—was a game of soldiers which differed from a children's game only in its extent and extravagance." Detachments of troops were taken into the cellars of the palace, the shutters were closed, and soon the sound of shooting could be heard. Later on, smoke-blackened figures would come out and the Sultan sardonically explained to inquirers that he was " practising European warfare."

To the situation which had broken the minds of his uncle and his brother, Abdul Hamid brought the strength of a neurotic character which had been distorted and hardened early by fear, hatred and frustration. His whole life is a witness to the cold, energising impetus which fear and shame can give to certain natures. Although recognised by the Sultan, he was generally suspected at the Court of being the illegitimate son of an Armenian, a despised because Christian race—the later massacres of the Armenians owed something to Abdul Hamid's obsession with this shame—and the Sultan eventually disowned him publicly. His mother, a Circassian woman, made it her short life's work to assert her son's rights; the affair grew into a typical intrigue of the harem and by the time he was seven the child was a trained spy, listener at keyholes and gatherer of secret information. The listening Sultan of later years who had the memory of a freak memory-expert, who rarely gave an opinion, who waited for people to reveal and betray themselves, who employed thousands of spies and personally collected and filed their reports and whom fear and hatred had trained to play one man, one tribe, one European country against another, had been made at his mother's knee. Isolated from the Court, his capacity to love was absorbed in her; outside of her—hatred.

The labyrinth at Yildiz repeated in stone the labyrinth of a mind consumed with fear. After his mother's death, the next powerful influence was hardly less fortunate. He was befriended by an elderly woman of the harem who dabbled in magic and astrology. It was she who taught him to make fetish dolls in the image of his enemies and to stick pins into them. When at the age of thirty-four he became Sultan, in succession to the sick Murad, Abdul Hamid made scores of these dolls in Murad's likeness and employed an agent to stick pins into them day and night, while he uttered prayers and curses to bring about Murad's death. The magic failed and—like Philip II with his son, Don Carlos—Abdul Hamid had Murad virtually imprisoned for life. Fear sought escape in greater fear: at Yildiz, where he passed the days studying his spies' reports, directing his *agents provocateurs*, brooding upon assassination, and the nights in moving from one divan to the next so that no one should know where he slept, his usual solace was tales of the guillotine and of the Terror. A favourite tit-bit was the massacre of St. Bartholomew. The private terror grew into certain public panics. He was terrified of Arab rivalry for the Khalifate—for if his Armenian nose meant anything, it meant that he was a usurper. He was terrified of the West. But his fear gave him shrewdness. He was (Miss Wittlin says) the first Oriental to understand the new money power; and Pan-Islam was the first true call to unity against the feared and hated Christians. It achieved one important political result: the reconciliation of Turkey and Persia; but ironically it worsened the money situation, for the appeal to fanaticism meant that the people neglected industry for religion. He was clever enough to play off the great Powers against one another and to postpone the fatal day.

One curious, even affecting episode, breaks the monotonous and fantastic evil of this picture. It is fittingly grotesque. The one European who appears to have awakened his trust, to whom he seems even to have revealed a craving for friendship, was the Kaiser. They met like two Gods, each wearing his imaginary halo of divinity. And the Kaiser, with typical German crassness, bent forward and kissed the Sultan on the cheek. It is said that the Sultan was left speechless and as if soiled by this physical touch, for he was divine and no man had ever been allowed to touch his person. The desecration nevertheless appeared to break down a barrier. Otherwise, except in the company of a few women, he seems to have known little ease of mind. Like the " spider of the Escorial," the spider of Yildiz sat alone, crouching, timid but wily and adept to pounce, upon a web of fears and suspicions so intricate that, when the Young Turks burst in, he was too incredulous to defend himself. He had died so many times already.

V. S. PRITCHETT.

**Abdul Hamid.* By Alma Wittlin. Translated Norman Denny. Lane 12/6.

OMEGA AND ALPHA

Roger Fry. By VIRGINIA WOOLF. *Hogarth Press.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

Good book. If the exigencies of journalism permitted, a reviewer should confine his remarks to these two words. Good book; which the thousands who know Mrs. Woolf's work, or Roger Fry's, will be reading, and about which, therefore, nothing need be said. Good book and sad, and here loquacity can start. For though Mrs. Woolf does not stoop to the pathetic, though she keeps with dignity and disinterestedness to her theme, her readers are tempted to stray from it, and to reflect gloomily upon the abbreviation of civilisation and the failure of hope. All that Fry cared for, and worked for, is being destroyed. Good sense has

gone, so have the pursuit of the truth, peacefulness, and France. In their places stand pernicious idealism, propaganda, violence, Hitler. Courage has become the only virtue, mysticism the only victory. Sterile both of them. The steady determination of the civilised man to become slightly more civilised, and incidentally to benefit others, has been thwarted, at least for our generation. Fry was spared this disillusionment. He slipped on the floor of his flat in 1934, lucky fellow, and fractured his thigh, which saved him. Almost the last time I saw him, he was talking in his sensitive yet tough way about the European situation. "Things are going round a very nasty corner indeed," was his conclusion. Then he turned to some more fruitful topic, to Khmer sculpture, I think. He did not know how nasty the corner would be, and our thankfulness that he has passed away is a measure for our present sense of insecurity.

"Found wanting!" say the prim barbarians. For them, Fry epitomises a way of life which has failed. Barbarians are prim, as he discovered. They are "sour and melancholy elderly hypocrites full of sham modesty and noble sentiments" who have an instinctive dislike of art but are obliged to endure it in peacetime, because of its snob-value. When the Omega workshop fails, they rush to buy its products at half-price, and commercialise its designs. They cannot endure independence. When he enjoys Cézanne and Van Gogh twenty years too soon (in 1913 instead of 1933) Sir William Richmond announces that "he must not be surprised if he is boycotted by decent society." When he will not buy trash for the Metropolitan Museum at New York, Mr. Pierpoint Morgan sacks him. At the end of his life he appears to triumph over his enemies. His way of looking at things is tolerated. He wins the domestic happiness which the tragedy of his wife's illness had postponed. His authority as a critic stands higher than anyone's since Ruskin. He has friends and allies all over the globe. But the barbarians are waiting for war. "Found wanting," they chant, if they remember his trifling career to-day. The standards he upheld, the very objects he liked to look at, have collapsed.

There is no facile retort to their sneers. If we say "Beauty lives really, sanity must surely re-emerge" we fall flat. A reply must be hazarded, and on those very lines, but only a fellow artist can phrase it properly. So let us turn to Mrs. Woolf and attend to what she says. She is the perfect defender, who defends by expounding. Here is her description of a visit to his studio in 1918, after the so-called Great War, the war which was to end wars:

> He was huddled in an overcoat over the stove, writing. He was worn; he looked older; his cheeks were more cavernous; his face more lined than before. But he was as eager as ever to talk "about all sorts of things," and the room was, if possible, still more untidy. Mrs. Filmer had obeyed the command on the placard "Do not touch." Mrs. Filmer had not touched. Rows of dusty medicine bottles stood on the mantelpiece; frying pans were mixed with palettes; some plates held salad, others scrapings of congealed paint. The floor was strewn with papers. There were the pots he was making, there were samples of stuffs and designs for the Omega. . . . But on the table, protected by its placard, was the still life—those symbols of detachment, those tokens of a spiritual reality immune from destruction, the immortal apples, the eternal eggs. He was delighted to stop working and to begin talking. But directly the friend was gone, the article would be finished, and directly the light dawned upon that very untidy room he would be at work upon his picture. Whatever the theory, whatever the connection between the rhythms of life and of art, there could be no doubt about the sensation—he had survived the war.

That is the only sound defence to "Found wanting." There will always be apples and eggs. They are more indestructible than France. Even if apples and eggs are abolished, there will still be lumps and lines, which will stimulate the artist while the rest of us mock. Presently we stop mocking; under the stimulus, the artist is making something which would not have existed otherwise; a whole way of life, in itself a surprise, has accreted around his passion, so that even if his actual picture bores us, we are obliged to stare and to ponder. Some critics say that Roger's apples and eggs were bad ones; they have certainly never sold like Cézanne's. But they still keep their value as symbols of civilisation. They and the life that grew round them—including the startled onlookers—survived one war, and will survive another. The art-impulse seems indestructible, in fact. This is not to say that it can be left to take care of itself. It is dormant until we wake it up. And Mrs. Woolf's biography shows us how Fry was always waking up art, shaking it up, raking it up, right back from the days when he saw a red poppy burst in his parents' garden.

What form art will take next, I naturally don't know. Even Fry did not know, and he was very diffident in the midst of his self-confidence, and very ready to admit that he might miss the point in something new. But—and here he is our example—he never "boycotted" anything which he did not understand. To be sensitive, to have an open mind—these are valuable qualities even in wartime, whatever the wireless says. Do they help us to conquer the Nazis? They don't. They are weapons in a larger and a longer battle.

So the book, besides being good and sad, is sustaining. Directly and indirectly, it counsels endurance. Directly, because Fry had a great deal of private sorrow to bear and surmounted it successfully and even gaily. Indirectly, because we see functioning through him one of the finer sorts of human activity. It functioned in the past; he himself often recognised it—for instance, in the Lectures of Sir Joshua Reynolds. It will function in the future provided we do not allow ourselves to be numbed by horrors. Like most of us, Mrs. Woolf preaches best when she does not preach, and her accurate account of her friend's life, her careful analysis of his opinions, have as their overtone a noble and convincing defence of civilisation.

E. M. FORSTER

THE THIRD REPUBLIC

The Development of Modern France (1870-1939). By D. W. BROGAN. *Hamish Hamilton.* 21s.

Nothing could be timelier than the publication of Professor Brogan's admirable history of the Third Republic. For there is no question to-day which is asked with greater persistency than the question why France collapsed. The book, naturally, does not deal with the immediate causes of the breakdown; but anyone who wishes to understand the deep and fundamental causes of France's weakness cannot do better than read Brogan. There are over 700 closely printed pages of it; and admirers of *Inside Europe* may find it heavy going—may be overwhelmed by Brogan's wealth of information. But while Brogan is a scholar, he is also a brilliant writer, and the time spent on his remarkable book will be a gilt-edged mental investment.

He has rendered history an enormous service; for, strange as it may seem, no history of the Third Republic even approaching his book for breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding has been written in any language.

Brogan does not pontificate, and allows the reader to draw his own conclusions; lazy readers may even be led to complain that they cannot see the wood for the trees. But the attentive reader will realise that in every episode Brogan relates—be it the Thiers-Gambetta split, or the Panama scandal, or the Dreyfus

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Loss of Eden

D. BROWN & C. SERPELL

In the leaflets just dropped over England Hitler makes "a last appeal to reason." This work of fiction is a flesh-creeper with a serious moral, for it is the story of how the acceptance of a peace on "equal" terms delivers us into Hitler's hands. A nightmare—but a horribly fascinating one told with all the vividness which made Mr. Wells' inventions so strangely convincing. 7/6

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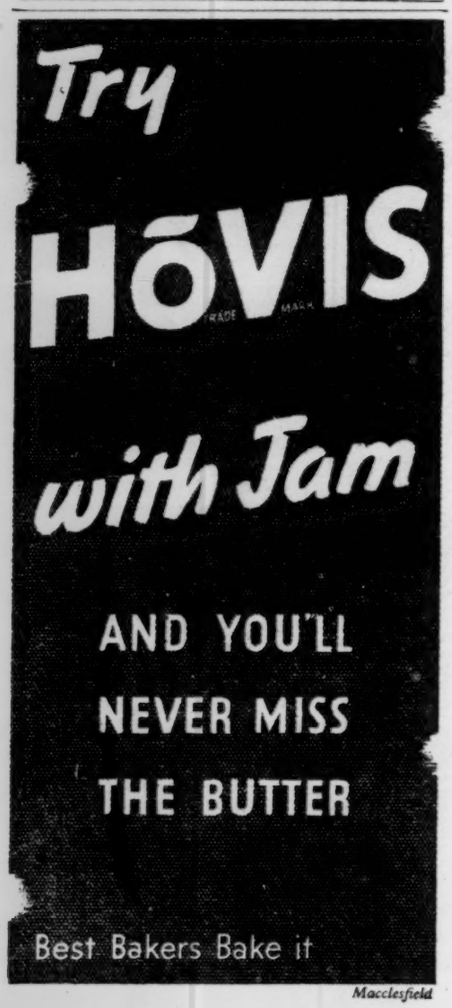

case, or the defeatist currents among the Socialists in the last war, or the *affaire* Malvy, or the automatic failure of the Left-wing majorities in the Chamber ever to last more than two years—he invariably puts his finger on what is most significant in relation to the "development" of the France that has just died. The Third Republic was a world in which history repeated itself—with variations, of course—more frequently than it did anywhere else. But it was also a world in which—as the last phase so clearly showed—people relied rather too much on the repetitions of history, and on the "système D"—on the French genius for muddling through.

As one reads carefully through Brogan's admirably told story, one is constantly reminded of something in France that happened quite recently. What could be of greater topical interest than, for instance, Brogan's account of the *affaire* Malvy—that personification of the *république des camarades* which was later to produce the Bonnets, the Mistlers and the Chautemps—that is, the representatives of that same Pals' Republic which worked so hard to rehabilitate after the war the Malvys and the Caillaux. No less topical is Brogan's account of the pacifist activities of the Socialist Party in the last war, with Laval as one of the principal defeatists. Twenty years later over the Abyssinian crisis the same Laval, under a different party label, smashes France's policy of collective security, and, five years later, he works hard for a peace at any price. Laval is not a traitor to his country; he is just as representative of France as is the Chautemps of the Pals' Republic, and, in quite another way, Clemenceau. The story of the Third Republic is largely the story of the men with a sense of national self-preservation and of the men without one. Since the last war, and especially since 1934, this sense of self-preservation became singularly deficient—both on the Left and on the Right. The Right, with their pandering to Hitler, completely lost sight of France's true national tradition, while the Left, always untrained to think of France in terms of world affairs, proceeded to carry out its economic experiment of lower output and shorter hours, with Nazi Germany next door busy rearming night and day.

The healthy nationalism of a Clemenceau degenerated, on the one hand, into the fine but unreal rhetoric of an Herriot, and the bogus-strong-man attitude of a Daladier, and on the other hand, into the Mussolinomania of the La Rocques, the Ybarnégarays, the Pétains and the De Monzies. De Monzie, like Bonnet, was technically a man of the Left; but one of the things Brogan continuously illustrates is the danger of attributing any virtues or vices to the Left or the Right alone. His profound knowledge of provincial France, of all its petty local politics, are, in his hands, a great debunking weapon against the more obvious interpretations of French politics. One of the points Brogan dwells on is the extraordinary lack of economic and financial understanding among both the French people and its rulers. Thus the repeated failures of the Left Governments to deal with the "200 families" he attributes to the simple fact that the "200 families" were, in reality, the two million families on whose support the Radical-Socialists depended.

The loss of the great national tradition, the war-weariness resulting from the last war, the easy-going complacency in the *république des camarades*—a complacency which, alas! was shared by the *république des militaires*, the *république des diplomates*, the *république des instituteurs* and half a dozen other "republics"—all these have a share of responsibility for what has happened to unhappy France. To say that France was betrayed by a "Fascist clique" is a totally inadequate explanation. For the "Fascist clique" to succeed—and the Vichy Government is something much more complex—a suitable soil was needed for their activities. It is this soil which Brogan describes with such profound insight.

Perhaps, for the benefit of the ordinary reader, a greater number of summings-up would have been helpful. All readers would also have welcomed a much more detailed table of contents. To ask Brogan for a complete bibliography of his sources would, of course, be too much—especially with the present shortage of paper; but at least a list of his principal sources would have been useful. One suspects that the main source for his last four chapters was not French! A. W.

CRIME AND DETECTION

Maigret to the Rescue. By GEORGES SIMENON. *Routledge.* 8s.

Double for Death. By REX STOUT. *Collins.* 7s. 6d.

Why Did Trethewy Die? By R. A. J. WALLING. *Hodder and Stoughton.* 8s. 3d.

The Stoat. By LYNN BROCK. *Collins.* 7s. 6d.

Malice in Wonderland. By NICHOLAS BLAKE. *Collins.* 8s.

Murder at the Munition Works. By G. D. H. and M. COLE. *Collins.* 7s. 6d.

No Man's Hand. By JOSEPH L. BONNEY. *Heinemann.* 7s. 6d.

Dead March in Three Keys. By PETER CURTIS. *Peter Davies.* 7s. 6d.

Not a Bad Show. By FRANCIS BEEDING. *Hodder and Stoughton.* 8s. 3d.

Detective Stories of To-day. Chosen by RAYMOND POSTGATE. *Faber and Faber.* 8s. 6d.

To judge by the success of its predecessors it should be quite safe to recommend the new volume of Maigret to all readers of detection: I have yet to hear a hard word said against Simenon from the most critical lips. The protagonists of culture excuse their condescension to crime by declaring he reads better in French than in translation; the fanatics for clues complain mildly of the realistic atmosphere—"Why, it's almost like reading a novel." But both parties combine to denude the shelves of Maigret stories as fast as Messrs. Routledge can turn them out.

Maigret to the Rescue reads more like a novel than ever, it must be admitted. The characters insist on leading an everyday life in spite of murder in their midst; and you feel that Maigret, whose passion for tracking down felons is never as keen as his curiosity about human nature, may at any moment resign from the Sûreté and take up the more congenial career of novelist. But the Simenon theme is always the same: every individual has a secret cupboard behind the façade he shows to the world. Once you find a key to the cupboards—and what a skeleton key Maigret carries in his bland interrogations!—you unearth not only the motive for crime but a plethora of interesting material. These extra discoveries constitute the variations on the theme; and in "The Flemish Shop" and "The Guinguette by the Seine," the two stories in *Maigret to the Rescue*, it must be admitted that the variations are so absorbing and distracting that one can easily forget the crime *motif*. The translation by Geoffrey Sainsbury is a triumph of transposition from colloquial French to colloquial English, and I have no sympathy with sticklers for the original language, particularly now when future supplies of French books will be unprocurable.

After the taste of Maigret the rest might well resemble slabs of Canadian Cheddar after a segment of ripe Brie; but Mr. Rex Stout redeems the Anglo-Saxons from insipidity. *Double for Death* introduces a new detective, Tecumseh Fox. The merit of Fox is largely negative, a complete absence of the silly little habits and emphatic facial movements that are

commonly employed to bolster up a detective's personality; but his few positive qualities are admirable: he is intelligent, unsentimental and brisk, and he solves his cases with his brains and not his fists, which is astonishing nowadays in America. The plot of the book cannot be revealed without detriment, but it is exciting, fast, eminently plausible and winds up with a genuine and original solution. Mr. Stout wavered in some of his previous books between farce and melodrama, but in *Double for Death* he has dropped his affectations and found a technique that does him credit.

Trethewy, a retired K.C. writing his reminiscences of the Bar, receives threatening letters and is finally murdered. *Why Did Trethewy Die?* It hardly requires the expensive services of Tolefree to find the reason; even the local Cornish police might have thought up the answer. But *who* killed him is a different matter, and Mr. Walling has to show himself more assiduous than ingenious in unearthing this particular murderer. *Why Did Trethewy Die?* is conscientious and mildly interesting.

The Stoat is a good title and brings the good news that Colonel Gore has rejoined our detective force, but after a most dramatic start, in that eerie atmosphere Mr. Brock can conjure up so cleverly, the story tails off into a long rigmarole of past history, which may be sound detection but makes very dull drama. The squeal in the Devonshire woods when the Stoat gets to work is forgotten, while we drowse among parish registers in the West of Ireland. I wish Mr. Brock could have thought of something more continuously exciting for the Colonel's resuscitation.

The Coles and Nicholas Blake all three have a down on big business, so it comes natural to them to locate their crimes in such disreputable society. *Malice in Wonderland* occurs in a gigantic Holiday Camp run by Wonderland Ltd., but the malice consists of practical jokes and stops short of murder. Nicholas Blake has the time of his life, ridiculing the bourgeoisie at play, but he scamps the detective side of his work shamelessly. One sentimental red herring and a German spy are supposed to fob us off from the solution. The susceptible mass-observer sent down to collect sociological data at the camp provides plenty of fun; and we must make do with that, since the author has come to despise detection as a serious medium.

With the Coles a detestable reactionary factory manager has his wife blown to blazes by an explosion in his office at the works. A noble Socialist shop-steward, whom he has just sacked, is suspected of the crime—oh! how unjustly! The list of *dramatis personae* in *Murder at the Munition Works* runs to two pages from which to choose the villain, but as most of the characters are members of the Labour Party, pacifists or readers of the Left Book Club, the field is evidently narrower than might appear at first sight: in fact, proceeding by political elimination, the candidates for the halter are reduced to a mere two. The scenes of strikes and labour-meetings are well and intimately described, but the Coles' bias to the Left will lead the reader straight to the solution.

No Man's Hand is by a new author, who attempts the difficult feat of bamboozling the public with an hermetically sealed room murder. Of course it is a contraption; and the contraption just works, but with what a creaking of machinery! The dullest feature of these sealed rooms is that you are forced to concentrate on a problem of mechanics for 200 pages, with a shrewd misgiving all the time that the author is up to some hocus pocus—a misgiving that has been too often justified. Mr. Bonney cannot be entirely acquitted of that misdemeanour, as he suppresses evidence, but he shows some aptitude for detective writing which may be better employed in future.

Dead March in Three Keys is a murder novel, not detection. Peter Curtis is said to be an accomplished novelist in disguise, and writes like one. The murderer's plan of action is ingenious and the characters are worked on with gusto. A murderer's character exercises a great fascination over novelists, and they nearly always paint it brilliantly. I can't help wondering how they all know exactly what it feels like.

Not a Bad Show is a war thriller about a secret formula, and the best of the war thrillers that have appeared about this war. Even so, no secret formula is ever as terrible in its effects as the formula for writing about secret formulae.

Detective Stories of To-day provide 20 stories by our best known detective writers, but so many have appeared elsewhere that you will be lucky if half of them are not familiar. A good book for the *visitor's* bedroom.

RALPH PARTRIDGE

POEMS FOR THE PRESENT

Fear No More. A Book of Poems for the Present Time by Living English Poets. *Cambridge University Press.* 3s. 6d.

America Was Promises. By ARCHIBALD MACLEISH. *Lane.* 2s. 6d.

Fear No More is a collection of verse, written but not for the most part published, during the last five years. The poets and the compilers remain anonymous. Anonymity is the seal, the stipulation of the book, and we are asked to receive it as a something more in response to the present. Readers are warned not to expect attitudes or beliefs. "The importance of poetry is that it gives courage for contemplation, not that it specifies conclusions. The theme of a poem is not the first thing; the question is, at such a time, Can poetry be written?" Thus the preface. But obviously in making their choices the compilers have been very much affected by theme, for they have excluded equally patriotic and revolutionary verse, and war is hinted at in less than a dozen pieces. At most the collective poet who emerges could be described as an *homme de bonne volonté*, putting pen to paper as the rest of us go on posting letters or the busman continues to drive his bus. Further, it seems that "at such a time" the sex lyric, satire, high spirits, realism and surrealism are also under a cloud. What remains? Not, alas, solidarity of talent, but the hush of:

> Valour lissom as a prayer
> Running tiptoe up God's stair,

the brimming hush of:

> I heard a thrush at dawn to-day
> Sing before the rest had stirred.
> Her first few notes were very soft;
> As though she hardly dared,
> But very beautiful.

A common denominator—it is hardly more positive than that—has been found in landscape and the soft pedal; turning the pages and coming on a *Fear No More* sunset or apple-tree is rather like reading the Memorable Meals that used to appear in *Wine and Food*. One writer deserves at least a couple of stars for getting "tansies," "zephyrs," "plash" and "myosote" into his first eight lines. The trouble with writing in this *genre* is that it immobilises everything it touches in the same sticky glaze. Not only Godstow and the Cotswolds, old men in lanes, linnets, harvesting, the candle at night, are infected, but also the volunteer "blown with heroism into Spain," the body by the wayside. Probably the worst poem in the book is "Dissolving Corpse."

> I met a late-lamented corpse
> Lying beside the way.
> That corpse he sighed at seeing me
> And motioned me to stay. . . .

Set these lines against the newspaper stories of invasion and internment camp!

> Those seemed this corpse's words to me
> With gentle martyr smile,
> Gentle at me his far regard
> Who putrefied vile.

Fortress Suits!

Taking a not too serious view of the conditions under which, Adolf and the weather permitting, we are spending these summer days (and nights!), Goss has turned his great brain and experience to the task of discovering the ideal "fortress suit" for men.

Our "other halves" have had it rather too much their own way in this matter. Long before there was any talk about the "fortress isle" and all that, the drapers' windows were full of designs—cunningly careless—to make women look as bewitching as ever, war or no war.

Goss's design for men is rather subtle. It consists of a three-piece suit, made up in worsted, saxony or tweed, with a wide range of colours and patterns, from clerical greys to horsey checks, ruddy browns to grass greens.

The lower garment consists of a pair of tubes, cut comfortably and shapely full, well creased, permanent turn-ups and no belt at back unless specially desired, the idea being that Goss's fit is good enough.

The under upper garment, generally called the vest or waistcoat, whilst cut to fit the individual figure is at the same time free of that "let's-have-more-air" feeling. It avoids, too, that most irritating meanness which some tailors practice, the Short-backed waistcoat. The "Fortress" design is cut low into the small of the back, leaving a comfortable overlap around the top inch or two of the trousers.

The outer upper piece, usually called the jacket, is again cut generously to give comfort to hearty and aesthete alike, but with the same cleanness and individuality about the fit and style.

So here you see the Goss "fortress suit"; just like any other suit, so you may think, and so it is—any other *Goss* suit.

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But horrors draw, and the next day
Came back I there to where he lay.

This maudlin dirge in the *babu* tongue ends with the comforting:

The wind I hear through sedge and bough,
And ask, sweet corpse,—" Ah—where art thou?"

Few of the poems, by the way, in *Fear No More* are as extravagantly bad as this, but it tells us the way the wind blows. And the book was noticed to the tune of four and a half columns in the *Times Lit. Supp.!* And the compilers gave themselves five whole years of English poetry to choose from! It is almost disconcerting to find here and there a poem that is recognisedly by Mr. Spender or Mr. Binyon.

America Was Promises continues the line of Mr. MacLeish's recent development: *Air Raid, Land of the Free*. He has completely abandoned the rather lush personal lyric of his youth for a sweeping address, bare of imagery, which relies on the striking power of fact. Many plain statements about the world as it is now are sufficient in themselves to rouse pity and indignation. "We ask for answers," writes Mr. MacLeish:

And there is an answer.
There is Spain Austria Poland China Bohemia.
There are dead men in the pits in all those countries.
Those mouths are silent but they speak.

At its best *America Was Promises* has the emphasis of headlines or a good documentary. Its fault is a certain emptiness of tone, as though there needed the accompaniment of film or music. However, if it comes to a choice between Mr. MacLeish's exhortation and the curdy sentiment of so many of the poems in *Fear No More*, most of us, I think, would infinitely prefer the former.

G. W. STONIER

JAPANESE ENCOUNTERS

Warning Lights of Asia. By GERALD SAMSON. *Hale.* 15s.

Mr. Matsuoka, Mr. Arita, Prince Konoye and all the other little Japanese gentlemen whose names have been recently in the headlines, give an impression of a tough gangster crowd who can strike terror into the hearts of the nation which until yesterday ruled the waves. But Mr. Gerald Samson, who travelled two thousand miles in Japan for £4 and, posing as a sick tourist, wandered through the South Sea Islands, shows us the Japanese in their own homes, and tells us about their talks "off the record."

Mr. Samson's greatest difficulty was to escape the attention of those numerous busy people who earn their living by recording the movements of foreigners, tapping their telephones, tampering with their mails and searching their baggage the moment they leave their hotel to take a look at the town. Sakamoto San was his first acquaintance. He was always there ready with bright suggestions for the best hotel and the most beautiful geisha girls—"the only ladies in Japan who treat men as equals." It says much for Mr. Samson's ingenuity that he travelled over the island of Hokkaido, which supplies 80 per cent. of the world's peppermint and menthol and visited the home of the Japan Steel Works, where whippet tanks and mines and other explosives are turned out in vast quantities and scrap iron is piled high in the yards.

It was in the island of Hokkaido that Mr. Samson was lucky enough to run across a veteran Sussex missionary, Dr. Batchelor, who has made an important contribution to ethnology by studying the Ainu people from whom in part at least the Japanese have sprung. He also met Dr. Munro, another British expert, who for years has tried to improve the conditions of the submerged Ainu. Dr. Munro claimed to have found proof that the Ainu was of proto-Aryan stock, but his theories were distasteful to the Japanese, who hated to be represented as of Mongol type, since they believe themselves to be of Divine descent. However, when Hitler arrived on the anthropological scene with his Aryan complex, the Japanese immediately reversed their policy and the "untouchables" of yesterday "were officially recognised as the progenitors of Great Japan, who must be saved at all costs from extinction."

Two thousand miles away, the Caroline Islands, covered with coconut palms, bananas and mangoes, oranges and pineapples, hibiscus and bougainvillea, have been dragged into the troubled stream of politics because of their strategic importance to Japan. Here and in the other mandated islands, the Marianas and the Marshall, lagoons "afford shelter for submarines and light surface craft" and aircraft bases; several good-sized airports are now completed in islands inhabited by the Polynesians, "a peace-loving and likeable people," living a primitive existence dressed in loin cloths and grass skirts. Such islands are subject for a Somerset Maugham novel; Japan's southwards expansion policy may turn them into scenes of conflict between the Japanese and the American navies.

Most Governments are acutely sensitive about tourists who have stumbled into their fortified islands, and Mr. Samson arrived back in Japan just when the military putsch of February, 1936, was followed by martial law. He was soon "accosted in a dim corridor by three disreputable-looking individuals" who took him off to the police station. His next twenty days were spent in a cell with five grimy convicts. The authorities showed a good deal of imagination in charging him with "fomenting trouble between the Mexican and Japanese Governments," and, but for the happy coincidence of a French lady who had seen him taken away and then passed on the knowledge to the British Embassy and journalist friends, Mr. Samson might have disappeared. After his release he travelled to China, and journeyed from North to South interviewing Generals—the principal pastime, it would seem, of every journalist who visits the country. His description of the early stages of the war has already been covered—and with a far deeper political insight—by James Bertram in *Unconquered China* and by Jack Epstein in *The People's War*. But these two writers had the advantage of living in China for some time and appreciating the war's significance.

Warning Lights of Asia is an excellent travel book. Mr. Samson, however, was not content to give his readers a description of his travels, and has sandwiched in a political excursus after each chapter. This attempt to provide an easy guide to the major issues of the Far East is not successful. Mr. Samson is a good explorer and reporter, but rather a naïve politician, and these slabs of disjointed politics serve rather to spoil the continuity of the narrative than to show any political significance underlying Mr. Samson's pleasantly recorded observations.

DOROTHY WOODMAN

"GOD'S PLENTY"

Elizabethan Plays and Players. By G. B. HARRISON. *Routledge.* 12s. 6d.

In this book Dr. Harrison adds one more to the services he has done to Elizabethan scholarship. His name is enough to guarantee its accuracy and the profundity of its research; but at the same time it is often as pleasant as his "Elizabethan Journals." Full as it is of references to original authorities, it is not

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beyond the ordinary reader, and much of it might be the easy talk of a polymath bringing out of the treasury of his learning, just as occasion suggests, things new and old.

Beginning with a short account of the Scriptural and Morality drama, he passes on to an analysis of that strange work, *Cambises*, and thence to the "lamentable tragedies" or lively comedies which are the real beginning of Elizabethan dramatic writing. This leads him to the story of the building of the theatres, to Lyly, Greene, Kyd, Marlowe, and the other University wits. Never forgetting that the actors are hardly of less importance than the authors, he sketches the careers of Tarleton, the Burbages, Alleyn, and Kemp; and, as actors need theatres, he describes the Rose, the Curtain, and the Globe. But also he illustrates the content of the plays—the Machiavellian heroes, the Humours. Little indeed appears to be omitted: the student, with the help of the index, will find almost everything he requires.

Specially valuable, I think, is Dr. Harrison's account of the famous Stage War between Ben Jonson and the "Poetasters." He disagrees with other scholars, but refuses to "wrangle, like some Hyde Park orator, with those whose views are different"; and he wisely observes that "our knowledge of the past is more often than not utterly distorted"; for events survive only when recorded. But on the whole it is likely that his portrait of Jonson, and his presentation of the rights and wrongs of the quarrel, are more than approximately true.

And here I would mention that Dr. Harrison's incidental remarks should not be neglected. Thus he rightly observes that "the old notion that Virgil" (in the *Poetaster*) is Shakespeare is nonsense. In another place he hints his belief that *King John* is of dual authorship. No longer must teachers tell their pupils that the "wooden O" of *Henry V* is the Globe; for the Globe was not yet built. When Rosencrantz says of the players, "Their inhibition comes by means of the late innovation," Dr. Harrison informs us that "innovation" then meant "revolution," and very likely refers to the Essex rebellion. In one or two cases I should venture to enter a caveat. He says that it was noted "by gossips" in 1599 that the Earl of Derby was writing plays. It was at any rate noted by George Fenning, the Catholic agent employed to discover whether Derby could be set up as a rival claimant against Elizabeth. The idea was vain, he wrote: "our Earl of Derby is busied only in penning comedies." In a matter of such importance Fenning would hardly have relied on mere rumour. Again, I do not believe—in spite of the crowd of scholars on the other side—that Chettle is referring to Shakespeare in his apology for publishing Greene's libel: "myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes." The evidence is of the flimsiest.

Others of Dr. Harrison's "asides" are of a different kind. Such are his hits at Adolphus Ward. Ward was "a Victorian Chief Examiner," assigning marks to poets not according to their literary gifts but according to their "general good conduct." He held the man Marston in abhorrence, and therefore gave Marston the poet a low third class. On the other hand, he liked the moral tone of Heywood's *Woman Killed With Kindness*, and therefore "nodded maudlin approval" of the play as a work of art. Thus are the pundits of one generation contemned in the next.

E. E. KELLETT

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TAKE

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and parachute—to his own country. Mr. Fleming's fantasy was written two months ago, in the good old days of Maginot and the Umbrella. It dates. That wouldn't matter so much if—apart from the Chamberlain setting—it was independently funny. And at moments it is. Hitler blundering on to the stage of a village fancy-dress gala and rapturously acclaimed, Hitler confronted by a deaf old woman who shoos him off her doorstep, Hitler tangled in a tree and landing in a cattle pond—these, in a falling scale, are traditionally funny. But, in a well-bred way, Mr. Fleming has felt compelled at every turn of his story to jab another pin into the hated effigy; he takes up the fatal attitude of *pity*—"poor little chap!" "unhappy little bore!"—which reveals rather more about the author than about his subject. The cracks in this sort of satire would have been plain enough even two months ago. Low's drawings are another matter. Mr. Churchill, with dogged and genial cunning, very properly supplies both frontispiece and jacket, and the Chamberlains inside remind us how much we have lost (from the point of view of caricature) with a reconstructed Government. The Hitlers are middling; one gem—the Führer with balmy grin leaning forward to sniff a bouquet handed by a little girl.

Ballet—to Poland. Edited by ARNOLD HASKELL. Decorated by KAY AMBROSE. *Black.* 12s. 6d.

This book is in the nature of a Benefit Performance in aid of the Polish Relief Fund, and towards such a performance it would be quite inappropriate to adopt a highly critical attitude. But it is in fact a very interesting compilation and one which requires no condescension. It contains ninety photographs by the leading ballet photographers and many contributions by experts, all of which are interesting and some first rate. Among the latter, Constant Lambert's article, *Ballet and Musical Interpretation*, contains some excellent ideas which need further development and deserve a close study by choreographers. Arnold Haskell's *War Ballet and National Culture* is a good contribution to the fight against obscurantism. Alas, some of it is already out of date. "Germany," he says, "has expelled those of whom she should be proudest—Thomas Mann, Reinhardt, Bruno Walter, Kurt Jooss; each one a leader in his respective profession. The countries of their exile have gained something permanent." And now Kurt Jooss, almost the greatest choreographer of our time, is in an English internment camp, his whereabouts unknown even to his own family. Mr. Philip Richardson's fascinating bird's-eye view of ballet in England from 1910 to 1940 provides certain gloomy reflections of the same nature, but also many inspiriting reminders, and is a valuable document. This book deserves to be bought for itself as well as for its charitable intention.

Week-end Competitions

No. 548

Set by Thomas Smallbones

A recent film with the inviting title, *The Way of All Flesh*, turned out to have no connection at all with Samuel Butler's book. The usual prizes are offered for a paragraph (300 words) from the advance publicity of a film entitled *Jude the Obscure* or *Persuasion*, or *Murder in the Cathedral*, or *Sentimental Journey*, or *The Golden Bowl*.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Friday, August 16th.

2. Competitors may use a pseudonym. Typescript is not insisted on, but writing must be on one side of the paper only.

3. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

4. No competitor is eligible for more than one prize in any one week.

The result of last week's competition will be announced in our next issue.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 546

Set by Allan M. Laing

Mr. Bernard Shaw celebrates (or rather, refuses to celebrate) his 84th birthday on the 26th of this month. The usual prizes are offered for characteristic greetings from any three of the following (no total entry to exceed 250 words): Wyndham (Tarr) Lewis, Robert Blatchford, E. C. Bentley, Damon Runyon, W. H. Davies, James Bridie, St. John Ervine, Hannen Swaffer, John Masefield, Rebecca West, "Flawner Bannal" and the late William Topaz McGonagall.

Report by Allan M. Laing

I must admit to a certain disappointment. When I set this competition, I knew that Wyndham Lewis, Rebecca West and James Bridie entries would be difficult and scarce; but I confidently expected half a dozen sparkling clerihews, a nice string of fresh Runyons, an adumbration or two of Swaffer at his most insufferably patronising, dozens of metrical Masefields, soap-and-acid Blatchfords, and strenuously blunt Ervines, with perhaps a few limpid Davies lyrics, two or three excruciating fragments from the Sweet Singer of Dundee, and an accurate placing of G. B. S. from the blotting-paper mind of Flawner Bannal ("if we hadn't had him we might just as well have had nobody at all").

Well, my hopes weren't realised. There was, instead, a general smug agreement that Mr. Shaw is a bore, arrived at on the basis of a very superficial acquaintance with his writings. No one, apparently, remembered enough of *Fanny's First Play* to place Flawner Bannal at all. On the whole, the entries prove Mr. Shaw's wisdom in declining to make birthdays into red (or any other) letter days.

As for the entries actually received, Stanley Sharpless sent a good Davies, beginning: "What is this life, if full of stress, We have no time for G. B. S.?"; Mrs. Marshall Jones contributed by far the best Swaffer, but her Rebecca West was a misrepresentation and her Ervine too slight; "O'Shea" was the only one to attempt the easy McGonagall: he made quite a good job of it; and D. N. Dalgleish might have had a chance with her Bridie if she had complied with the terms of the competition, which asked for three greetings.

It is with a certain misgiving as to their having reached the required standard that I recommend the prizes be divided into three equal parts and awarded to Charles Furbank, Guy Innes and Willy Tadpole. (Stanley Sharpless was a close runner-up.) A selection from their entries, which is all we have space for, are printed below.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS FROM WYNDHAM LEWIS

Where's Shaw now? Ghosts have got him,
He thinks of his triumphs and they rot him—
The women who embraced him on settees,
The Julias, Janets, Ellens, Mrs. Ps.
He's with The World, destroying the outmoded,
Oscar and Frank are laughing, Harris and Irving goaded.
Your last play was an old man's sigh,
It's "When We Dead Awaken," Shaw!—or die.

CHARLES FURBANK

ROBERT BLATCHFORD

Not since I was a sergeant in the Ramchunder Fusiliers—the "Ould Roughs": Moodkee, Muzuffernuggur, Ferozeshah, Gujerat—have I met the equal of such a spinner of cuffers as yourself. Heartiest greetings—and George for Merrie England for a century not out!

JOHN MASEFIELD

Oh, some prefer George Eliot to Browning or to Burns,
And some claim Moore as George the First until the house adjourns;
But here's to good old George the Last, with cordial returns,
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh, some are fond of Kipling, and some are all for Blake,
But poets and their poetry give me the belly-ache;
So I am all for Bernard Shaw from truck to garboard-strake
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

GUY INNES

E. C. BENTLEY

G. B. S.
May your shadow never grow less!
You're already too lean
Old bean.

WILLY TADPOLE

THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By CYNICUS

HITLER AND OUR EQUITIES — THE POST-WAR FUTURE OF EQUITY STOCKS—RICHARD THOMAS DEBENTURES

Now that the post-Budget recovery has run its course it seems that equity shares must fluctuate with the war news. This is not very logical, but understandable. In relation to the controlled rate of interest in the gilt-edged market the yield on equity shares is, as I have argued recently, much too high, but the public regards the margin between the two as a trade risk and vaguely believes that the trade risk increases if the war news is bad and diminishes if it is good. For the time being, therefore, Hitler will dictate the near-term movement of ordinary shares—until we come to the stage when the exigencies of war finance oblige the Government to compel every citizen to give his labour and services to the State in return for a coupon covering a subsistence ration. But what of the long-term future? What will happen to equity shares after the war? A sensible jobbers' circular which I have been reading argues that our economy is bound to return, with some modifications, to the capitalist system because it is impossible to combine the capitalist system with the totalitarian. But what modifications? I suggest the investor should begin to visualise the coming changes in our economic system which are likely to affect his equity shareholdings. It may help him to value them more correctly to-day.

* * *

Many, many years ago Mr. Nicholas Davenport wrote in this journal two articles pleading for an economic general staff, a National Investment Board and an extension of public control over important industries as the first steps towards a planned national economy. His case is now so overwhelming that most people must imagine that an economic general staff and a National Investment Board are already in existence. But they are not. Time moves slowly in Whitehall and all that exists to-day is a Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs with no economic general staff at all and a variety of beautiful flower-boxes in the Treasury windows labelled "Advisory Council to the Chancellor" or "Economic Advisory Committee." Even the City regards this rate of progress as slow. Even the City is prepared to see an extension of public control over industry after the war which would frighten the old women in the Treasury. For example, I do not think it would be a great shock to City opinion if the following industries were nationalised—transport, cables and wireless, gas and electricity, coal, iron and steel, armaments, chemicals, cement, heavy engineering, including electrical engineering. The efficient management of these industries depends so largely on a knowledge of the rate of national investment that without public control it is difficult to see how stability, much less prosperity, could be secured. If public control of these industries were to take the form of a public board issuing different categories of capital stocks to the investor, I hope that there would be no more bastard creations such as London Transport "C," or British Sugar Corporation, which are neither equity nor fixed-interest. Not that I am opposed to equity stocks for a public board, whose dividends, within, say, a minimum and a maximum, would depend on the earnings of the industry. A public board equity stock might become highly popular with the investor after the war, if its rate of dividend were fairly assessed. The maximum dividend for a public board equity in gas and electricity might be 4 per cent., in the railway industry 5 per cent., and in coal, iron and steel 6 per cent. The investor would not expect these maximum dividends to be paid unless the national resources were being more or less fully employed, but he would expect to receive, say, a minimum of 3 per cent. even in bad years.

* * *

I cannot see why the investor and the Stock Exchange should not become reconciled to, and indeed attracted by, dealing in public board equities in place of privately owned equities for a large number of industries. The variation in dividend between minimum and maximum would enable the speculative-minded to "buy and sell in anticipation" of changes in earning power. There would be ups and downs in market valuations to the great delight of stockbrokers. And outside this wide range of public boards there would still be equities in privately-owned and controlled trades, especially those dealing with consumer goods, which the Government would have no good reason or time to control. There would be bigger ups and downs in these "outsiders," which the Government would only regulate through its banking and investment controls. It would be a saner investment world to live in—not so speculative, not so indecent, but more efficient, more worthwhile and more inspiring for the private investor who is still left in control of his savings.

* * *

These reflections may help the investor also to value Richard Thomas 4½ per cent. first mortgage debenture stock. Can anyone imagine the iron and steel industry under private control after the war, with Richard Thomas' competitors trying to knock out its magnificent new continuous strip mill and throw Ebbw Vale again into stark unemployment? If not, then these 4½ per cent. debentures, with a second fixed and floating charge, are worth buying at 66 to yield £6 16*s.* per cent.

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ACADEMY Cinema, Oxford St. Ger. 2981 RAIMU in piquant comedy **"LA FEMME DU BOULANGER"** (A) and Leslie Howard in SHAW'S *"PYGMALION"* (A).

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